When the Veil is Rent

Francis Clement Kelley

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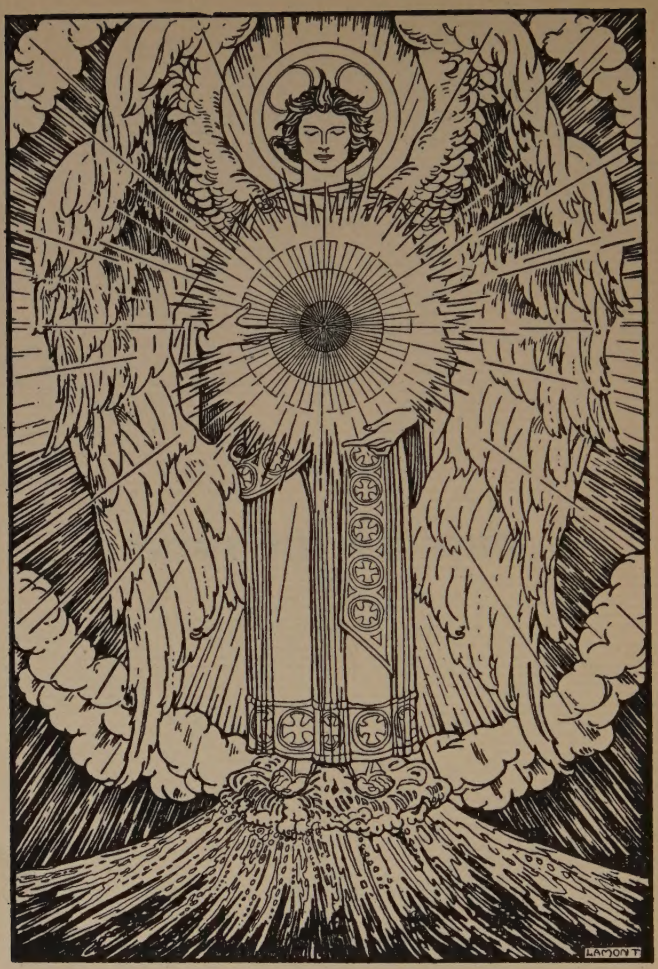
WHEN THE VEIL IS RENT



THE VISION OF THE SHIELD

Standing directly over the Fountain from which I had seen the River of Truth flow earthward, and with feet resting on the water as if on solid rock, I saw an angelic figure.

WHEN THE VEIL IS RENT

By

FRANCIS CLEMENT KELLEY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
FLORENCE E. LAMONT

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This Book
I dedicate
to my Fold of Many
Flocks in Oklahoma
where Love so well knows
that Pain is
her Sister

NOV 3 1983

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WHEN THE VEIL IS RENT

THE Angels keep their ancient places —
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces
That miss the many-splendored thing.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

I

Departure

The vista'ed past
Of the drear time I've given to the earth
Vapors and fades into a memory,
And the dark future, black with bitter fears,
Leaps into sudden lamps of hope and joy.

CANON SHEEHAN

CHAPTER ONE

DEPARTURE

FAR from being of the number of those whose entire religion is based on nothing more solid than a mystical experience, yet do I believe that most people, at least once in their lives, have heard a voice that seemed to come from out of a cloud-closed land. I think that there were times, at least one time, in the life of even the most ardent skeptic when he thought an unseen hand had touched him. He may explain it as a dream or hallucination, and it may have been either, but it holds a place of strange influence in his life with roots deep down in the not unfertile soil of memory.

How do I know? Because I know men. Old priests do. We are students of men from the day of ordination and we cannot help it, for the book of mankind is always open before us. Page by page in our daily experiences we read the heart and soul exposed in sorrow and in joy, in poverty and in riches, in power and in weakness, in gain and in loss, and on the bed of death. Thus we know all kinds of men and have learned the holy art of

making allowances. That is the one and only reason why we are not incurable pessimists, for we think of men not as kings or peasants, learned or ignorant, rich or poor, but, like ourselves, as exiles on this earth.

So I, an old priest, think that out of dim, mysterious regions sometime and somehow a wing has brushed every shoulder, a soft finger has been laid upon hands clasped in sadness, a voice has whispered into a willing or an unwilling ear, heaven has touched earth and left its imprint in the secret depths of every soul.

The strangest of my own experiences with the mysterious and inexplicable came to me late in life, perhaps near its end. To write of it will be, probably, my last task. I do not shrink from it in fear that some may say that it was nothing but an old man's dream. I do not claim anything for it. If people will have it a dream I shall simply let them have it so. For myself, I pass no judgment. I give it as it was given to me. It came from somewhere, somehow. Let those more learned and younger speculate. I no longer feel very wise, though once I had such a delusion about myself; and I am old enough to know that for me it does not matter very much what anyone thinks.

I knew William Bradford less, perhaps, than I knew any other man in this whole town of Louden. I had never exchanged ten words with him in all my life. He avoided me and I was never drawn to him. Yet William Bradford was easily the first citizen of our small community. I say "small" because Louden is a city of only ten thousand population and I, born in New York, never quite got the feeling for the crowded places out of my blood; not that I disliked the small city, but that I could all too easily make the contrast that put one in its place. I really do like Louden. I have been the pastor of its one Catholic parish for thirty-five years. Indeed it was I who built church and school and all the other parish structures here. It is a friendly city at bottom. I was Father Moylan to pretty nearly all the people in it, mine and those who thought they were not mine. William Bradford was one of the latter, fiercely one of the latter. I was no Father Moylan to him, but plain Mister Moylan, in spite of the fact that his wife was one of my flock. He professed no religion, and was supposed to be an atheist, which, however, he was not. It would be nearer the truth to say that he was a religious indifferentist, and not particularly successful in playing that part. There you have him

as he was to me for the twenty years that passed from the day he came to Louden till the day — of all my days the most inexplicable.

I have always tried to be just, but sometimes, I confess it, I found it hard to be just in the case of William Bradford. He was the head of the largest industry in the town and his treatment of my people was not always just. I never complained against it but once. I went to his office but got no farther than the outer lobby. He turned his back on me there and went into his private room with one bitter word flung back at me — "No." That word meant that I had lost one of my best families and William Bradford one of his most faithful managers. What was the trouble? I never knew, but this I do know, that William Bradford was a man of strong prejudices, the kind of man most easily led into misunderstandings, once he is aroused.

I said that I had always tried to be just. I will be just to William Bradford. According to his lights he was a good man. I admired him for his unswerving devotion to his family. He was stern, but always a faithful husband and father. He had married late in life and had but one child, a boy of nine, a bright, winning lad who promised to be a credit to him. Outside the family circle, too,

William Bradford was a charitable man. His gifts to the needy were widespread and wisely directed. He was a generous man in matters that concerned the welfare of his town. He loved money, but he used it well and had made it honestly. He was far in advance of his time in dealing with his workmen in an open-handed way, and had adopted profit-sharing plans long before other manufacturers, at least in our State, seemed to think of them. I always felt that something had happened in his life to explain his attitude toward religion. He dropped out of his own church and out of all thought of ever going back. But his charities he never forgot. I respected William Bradford, even if I regretted his most glaring weakness; and bigotry is a weakness. Sometimes it is the weakness of the strong; but to William Bradford it was a virtue.

The tragedy in the life of William Bradford was shared by another, a man who, strange as it may seem, was a Catholic priest and an old friend of his. His name was Arnold Rogers. I scarcely knew him, although he was acting as pastor of my parish at the time he was killed. He was a member of a religious order that had a college about fifty miles from Louden. This is how he came to me: My doctor had ordered me to take a rest and, to provide for

my parish, I turned, as most of the pastors in the diocese usually did, to the college. It was during the summer vacation and the president readily agreed to send me one of the professors, newly-ordained, a convert who had begun the study of theology rather late in life and did not finish till he was well over forty. All this the president explained in his letter of acceptance, perhaps to put me at ease, for he knew I would hesitate to turn over such a large parish to the care of too young a man.

Father Rogers arrived the afternoon of the day before I was to leave. I took him around and explained everything to him; told him of the hours of services and the regular routine of duty. He confessed that he had never done any pastoral work, but was pleased with the prospect of securing some practical experience. We sat up quite late. Next day I left with no misgivings, for I felt that my parish was in the hands of a good man who, in spite of his inexperience, would try to take proper care of it.

There was about Father Rogers a something that charmed me. It was not entirely his conversation, though that was engaging, especially to an old recluse whose greatest hobby was his parish and

who was about to take his first vacation in twenty years. Father Rogers spoke in a soft, well-modulated voice and used good language. He had traveled extensively and knew the Rome out of which I had all my memories of student days. It was Rome that kept us up so late, in spite of the doctor's warnings for me.

A tall, handsome man was this priest, young in orders, but mature in years and trials. He avoided speaking of himself. When I asked about his conversion he said, very simply: "It was a long way and a weary and anxious one, but, thank God, the end brought me home safe and to peace." I asked him if he had not been at college in America before he went to Rome. He answered that he had graduated from a small college in a neighboring state and had been in the ministry for a few years. Altogether he was a modest man, very humble, but I could see, also very spiritual. I showed him some old books, my second hobby, and he at once demonstrated the spirit of the collector who knows books. I cannot remember when I enjoyed an evening with a visitor as much as I enjoyed my evening with Father Rogers, the last I ever had with him in spite of my hopes. I left Louden with the feeling that I would have liked much better to stay at home

and take my vacation enjoying the company of my new friend; but him I was never to see again.

I know that I am taking a long time to arrive at the story of the tragedy. I had heard nothing about it before I returned to Louden, for I saw no American newspapers on the other side and came direct from the steamship to my home. I expected to meet Father Rogers at the station, but a strange priest was awaiting me there. He hastened to explain that he was taking "poor Father Rogers' place."

"But why 'poor Father Rogers'?" I asked.

Then he told me the sad story.

Two nights previous to my arrival Father Rogers had been called to visit a sick person. Returning home he saw William Bradford, who had his little son with him. He was about to cross the street. The priest hailed him and Mr. Bradford stopped. It appears that the men had been classmates in college and remained close friends up to the time Rogers changed his creed. They met, for the first time since the breach, on the corner of the street that night. People who saw them talking together said that while in conversation the priest suddenly reached over, grasped the little boy by the shoulder and flung him on the green grass near the curb. Bradford lifted his hand, and then, descending the

hill, an automobile out of the control of a drunken driver struck both men. They were taken to the hospital, but it was crowded and only one room was available. Both men were put into it. William Bradford had not regained his senses up to the time I heard the story. Father Rogers did, but for a few minutes only. When he opened his eyes he seemed to recall everything.

"Am I going to die?" he asked. He was told the truth and smiled. Looking over to the other bed he inquired: "And he, will he live?"

The doctor shook his head.

"Have you sent for a priest — for me?"

He was assured that one was driving over from the nearest parish. He was silent then, but kept glancing over at Bradford. Then he raised his right hand and, the doctor said, repeated something he did not understand. Of course he was giving Mr. Bradford conditional absolution. When his arm dropped he lapsed into unconsciousness again. The priest came, but Father Rogers died just as he finished giving him Extreme Unction. William Bradford lingered in a coma. He was still alive when I heard the story. The body of Father Rogers had been taken away to be buried in the cemetery of his community.

The shock of this tragedy set me back and the doctor ordered me to bed for a complete rest. I was not even permitted to read. Father Rogers was on my mind. William Bradford meant little to me. I could not sleep for thinking of Rogers and his sad end. But I was proud of him too, for he had given his life to save that boy. He had seen the automobile and knew that it was bearing down on them. He could have saved himself, but he had the instinct of the hero and would not do it at the child's expense.

Now comes my strange experience. It happened the night after I had taken to bed and to silence. I was dozing when, about eleven o'clock, I suddenly seemed to awake and sit up. A voice had spoken my name. I heard it, plainly.

"Father Moylan! Father Moylan!"

Standing at my side I saw William Bradford just as I had seen him in the flesh. I was not afraid, but collected and calm when I answered.

"Yes. What is it that you wish?"

The answer came out of moving lips. It was strong, but not like the voice of the William Bradford who had turned his back upon me in his office and said "No."

"I came to tell you that I was wrong about Owen Brennan. I want to right that wrong and show you how to do it for me," he said. There was a look of sadness over his face as he spoke. "I was wrong too," he added, "about many other things."

I am sure that I did not answer.

"Would you like to know about the other things?" he asked.

This time I answered by motioning toward a chair. In the most natural way possible he turned, brought it over to my bedside and sat down in it before he spoke again: "You will not sleep for a while, Father Moylan, and I know that you are not allowed to read. I may be a comfort to you. I was permitted to come."

Then, as simply as a little child recounting his adventures, but with the gripping solemnity of the greatest orator, William Bradford held my ear and my soul. I forgot that I thought myself listening to a dead man. I forgot my human fear of visitors from the other shore. I forgot my voice, for I asked no questions. I forgot my infirmity, for I thought of nothing but what he was saying. I think I forgot that I was alive, for William Bradford transported me to the land of the dead. I walked over it with

him. I felt as if I were his companion on the journey. For what time I did not then know, I was out of my world and in another world with William Bradford.

Here I shall set down in writing the story he told me and, as nearly as is possible, in his words. Then — it will be for others to form their own judgments.

II

The Plain of Understanding

His shoulder did I hold
Too high that I, o'erbold
    Weak one,
Should lean thereon.
    FRANCIS THOMPSON

CHAPTER TWO

THE PLAIN OF UNDERSTANDING

THIS is what William Bradford told me:

The first feeling I had when consciousness returned after that terrible blow was a thought of bitter anger against the priest for what he had done to my little boy. I had seen his arm shoot out, seize my son and fling him over on the grass. Then, before I could speak even a word of protest, a blow came and darkness fell. When I came back to life the recollection of that outrage was instantly with me.

I had not intended taking Gerard to the meeting that evening, but since his mother and all the servants were going out, I had no choice. I could not leave a nine-year-old boy alone, and I had promised faithfully to be at that particular meeting. At ten o'clock I left the hall and passed down the street in the direction of my home. Just as I had taken a few steps from the curb on Cherry Avenue to cross, I heard the old familiar voice of Rogers, and I turned to go back to the sidewalk; but he had come up right behind me.

I admit that I had been disappointed in Rogers. We had gone through college together as companions and intimate friends, drawn close by a common interest in the religious life of the school. He was a bright and pious student but had no particular leaning to formalism or ritual. Our friend Cotton was of that kind, so very naturally, it seemed to me, he became an Episcopalian. But Rogers seemed inclined to drift as I was drifting, if he drifted at all. I disliked Catholicism, perhaps more bitterly than most of my friends, for I had been brought up that way and the feeling was ingrained. So I took Rogers' defection to the Catholic Church as a personal hurt. We had been such close friends that I could not help feeling as if I had lost a brother.

But the Rogers I met that night was not a bit changed, outwardly at least, except in dress. That rich, musical bass of his boomed as of old and his handclasp was tight and strong without a bit of hurt in it. His grip was as distinctive as his voice. It made one think of the strong man who knew tenderness and was without guile.

"What are you doing here, Rogers?" I asked at once.

"Oh! I am only a visitor, or perhaps a 'supply' would fit the case better. Father Moylan of St.

Francis' Church, the one down on the corner of Cherry and Seventh, went off on a vacation and I was sent here to take his place for the summer."

"Are you in pastoral work?"

"No. I belong to a religious order of teachers. I am at our college in Winwood. Tonight I was out answering a sick-call and am now on my way back to the rectory."

"I was surprised and not a little resentful of your — " I began, and then the awful thing happened. Rogers' eyes took on a frightened look and his hand shot out toward the boy who was behind me. In an instant I saw the child's body flung on the grass and roll over toward the concrete sidewalk. Then all went black before me and in me.

It was not like opening my eyes when consciousness returned. It was more like opening a book, the book being myself. On the first line was my hatred of and my resentment against Rogers. Why had he hurt my boy? All my bitterness against his religion surged up in me. It all seemed so much like what I might expect of a pervert, though not at all what I would expect of the Rogers I used to know. I was puzzling over that when — I saw Rogers.

He was there before me, a new Rogers. I cannot explain how he had changed but I knew that he had. He was smiling. I cannot say that I saw all that, but I knew it, somehow.

"Why," I began, "why did you do that horrible thing, Rogers?"

"To the boy?"

"Yes."

"To save him. Did you not see the glare of the headlights?"

"No. I saw nothing."

"I did. The driver had lost control of his car. He was making straight for us and coming downhill. The boy would have been struck. I threw him out of danger. Then the car hit both of us."

"And — ?"

"We were flung down, knocked senseless on the concrete. You lingered, but I died that night."

"What? Are we dead?"

There was nothing of sadness in the smile that he gave me.

I understood in a flash and a certain joy shot through me. I had always feared death. Had it come and taken me so that I did not remember even the pain of the passing? Why had I feared it so much when there was so little to be afraid of? But

I felt humble and very much like a child, with a strange uneasiness in me and a great desire for Something — I did not know what. Then, somehow, I knew that Rogers could tell me what it was. I wanted to put out my hand to him and he understood.

"Don't try, Bradford," he said, or seemed to say. "Your body is still lying on a bed in the hospital. You are neither speaking nor hearing. You are only knowing, or better still, feeling and absorbing. You still think as if you were in the flesh. You will seem to walk, to use words, to have hands and head and other members, but you have none. You are spirit now, but spirit still hampered and confined until you are ready for — let us say, your peace."

"Where then are we, Rogers?"

"On the Plain of Understanding."

I am afraid that I was a little scornful when I asked: "Is that the Kingdom?"

"No, but very near to it."

"Rogers," I said, "I do not grasp my situation, but I feel you can help me; I do not know why. What do you mean by the Plain of Understanding and its nearness to the Kingdom?"

"It is true, Bradford," he said, "that I can help you. It is now my mission to do that very thing. There were obstacles to my helping on earth, obstacles not all made by you. I shall explain some of the mystery. You have a journey to make before you reach the Kingdom, but you cannot make it as you came here. You must understand better before you pass on to greater things."

"What must I understand?"

"Before everything else, yourself."

"And then?"

Rogers' face took on an expression of rapt worship. He made a gesture of deepest reverence and, in a voice full of meaning, answered: "The Eternal."

"Rogers," I said, "I tried to know Him, but I failed."

"You did not entirely fail or you would not be here. You shall see, however, wherein you did fail. You are not one of the lost, my dear Bradford."

"I doubt that there are really any lost."

"None is lost who ardently desired to be saved; none who did not reject the Light. There is someone near who will teach you how men are lost. He is going to speak to us."

THE GREAT DARKNESS

He knew that we were near and stopped as if afraid of us. Then he spoke, "Can you tell me where the Great Darkness is to be found?"

I felt the presence of that other with an uneasy sense of fear. No, it was not quite that: it was a sense of repugnance. I shuddered, as a trained musician shudders at a false note struck in the rendition of a masterpiece of harmony. The presence of the other brought to me the thought of disorder and degradation. He seemed to know what effect he would produce in us, for he came on with hesitant steps, like those of a blind beggar advancing on an unknown road, uncertain as to his reception. A dark mantle was over his head throwing the face into the shadow. He was searching for something, anxious but persistent. He knew that we were near and stopped as if afraid of us. Then he spoke:

"Can you tell me where the Great Darkness is to be found?"

I felt a new and more frightful revulsion and winced at the question; but Rogers answered:

"Do you not see light?"

"What is light?"

"If you do not know, my answer would mean nothing to you. You know only darkness?"

"It is what I have always known. On earth I called it light. I never wanted to know any other.

Darkness was my light. I know that now, here on this Plain of Understanding where there is a deeper darkness than I knew on earth. It is the Great Darkness that I seek. I cannot live outside it."

"There is no happiness in it." Rogers spoke sadly.

"That I know, but the light would mean greater unhappiness for me. I chose long ago and never changed. I hated the Light that was to illumine every man that came into the world. That hatred changed me into a being who cannot live in light any more than a fish can live in the upper air. Can you not tell me where is the Great Darkness?"

"I do not know; but I do know that you shall find it."

A great, wide crevice opened before our eyes and a lake of darkness filled it. Across it I looked as I might look over a sea that rolled black waves from shore to shore. They swelled and moved like the long roll of the ocean, neither breaking nor advancing. On its surface there was no ripple nor any reflection of light.

The other spirit rushed toward the lake.

"I know now," he cried, "I know now where is the Great Darkness. It calls me."

I saw him leap into the lake and fall on the dark waves. For one instant I could see him there, not sinking but changing. My thoughts conjured up a cup of black coffee over which a lump of sugar is held half submerged. It darkens, dissolves and disappears. Even so he seemed to become part of the lake of darkness, which then closed and was gone. I was appalled. Rogers stood silent. Then he said: " 'He came to give testimony of the Light, but the Darkness did not comprehend it.' "

"I thought I knew that person on earth," I ventured hesitatingly.

"You did," Rogers answered.

"Not —— ?"

"Yes."

"But he was a learned man."

"There is no wisdom but in the Truth."

"He used to speak eloquently of his love for truth," I urged, "and his one cry was that he was ever searching for it."

"So did Pilate ask 'What is Truth?' of the Only One who could tell him, but he did not wait for the answer."

"I remember that he said, in one of his lectures on earth, that death was annihilation. It now seems

that he was right, at least insofar as he personally is concerned."

Rogers turned to me quickly and answered decisively: "Neither sin nor error, nor hell itself, can take away from man the gift of immortality."

We passed on from the fatal spot, glad to go.

III

Realization

But the merchants slept in the silent mart,
And their lips were red from the poppied gold,
And a lump of earth was each silent heart,
And for this, their souls they had pawned and sold.

CANON SHEEHAN

CHAPTER THREE

REALIZATION

WE HAD not proceeded far before I saw what looked like a grove of gigantic trees before us. Rogers hastened his steps, so that I too had to hurry toward it. I was fearful of losing his company and soon learned that my fear was not unfounded, for when we reached the grove Rogers stopped.

"You must enter it alone, Bradford," he said; "but do not worry. You will meet someone you know in there and learn many things. I shall be here to meet you when you return."

"Then I shall return?" My voice must have betrayed my anxiety.

"You shall return," he assured me.

I looked back as I passed into the grove, but Rogers was nowhere to be seen.

In the shade of the trees a strange feeling came over me, a feeling reminding me of the earth life. I seemed again to be surrounded by its influence. Everything around me had the air of the material but, of course, I knew that such could not be. I was deeply troubled. Nevertheless all was beauty about

me in the green of the foliage, the scent and color of the flowers, the softness of the herbage under foot, the darts of light through innumerable branches, the sweetness of the air. In the world a combination so pleasing to the senses, with mysterious music trilling from the throats of many birds, would have left me in rapture. But an uneasy foreboding that something painful was to befall me grew and grew in me, and so I passed on, unmindful of all the beauty.

Deep in the forest I came to a garden and saw a great mansion which did not seem new to me. Somewhere, many times, I must have seen it before, but it was not finer nor larger than other mansions I could recall as having visited on earth. It was not even as fine and large as some. But I was sure that I knew every part of this one, and could not help but think that it was mine. I advanced through the garden along a flower-bordered walk to the door, opened it and entered. On one side I could see a long and elegant parlor; but it was to the other side that I directed my steps, toward a large and handsome library. There was a marble fireplace at one end. Books and pictures were on the walls, and here and there over the shelves, statues in bronze. Vases

of flowers were on the table and on the piano, so that the whole room was perfumed from them.

A man was sitting in a great leather easy chair, books around him on the massive table and on other chairs. I knew the man, but could not place him, though I tried hard to recall his face to my memory. He was too absorbed to hear my step as I crossed the carpet and I was by his side for some moments before he looked up. When he did there was no surprise on his face. He gave me no invitation to be seated. I looked into his eyes. Startled eyes those of mine must have seemed to him as he returned my gaze. For what appeared to be a long time I stood beside his chair and then, without invitation, took a seat in front of him, still gazing, and still trying hard to recall a half-vanished memory. The man was the one to break the silence.

"I had been expecting you," he said, as he closed the book in his hand and laid it on the table.

"Then you know me?" I ventured.

"It would be better to say," he answered, "that you know me. Did you recognize the place?"

"I thought I did."

"You ought to. Do you like it?"

"It seems the realization of something I wanted and had dreamed of for a lifetime."

His gaze went around the room and he answered in one word: "Exactly." Then his gaze came back to me and he spoke again.

"It is what you dreamed it to be. You built it, stone by stone, in those ambitious dreams. It is yours, since you made it your dream of Paradise."

"No, no." I spoke quickly, but anxiously, and with a certain fear.

"Think back," he urged, "and you will see that this was the real one, a mansion of beauty, fitting home for an intellectual and cultured gentleman who had made all the wealth he needed to live in comfort, a mansion home without a care and with luxury unstinted and leisure without end. Confess, this is the Paradise of which you dreamed. The Other you often banished from your thoughts. Your Paradise was of earth earthly, and here it is as you would have it."

"You seem," I spoke now with some asperity, "you seem to know me better than I know myself." "No," he answered, "only as well as you know yourself. I could not know you better. Let me show you that I am not wrong. You knew this place because it is made out of your dreams, your ambitions. You wanted to make money. You dreamed of advancement, step by step. That door

behind you opens into the room you hoped would see gatherings of the most powerful people of your country, all coming to you for advice and counsel. Yes, you had your ambitions and here is the palace of them. You see now that I know."

I did see. This man was reading my soul. I no longer had a defense. He went on:

"Your ambitions never really had God for their goal, though they did not exclude Him. You had planned your life of comfort, power and advancement after commercial conquest. Your conception of duty was duty to yourself."

I rallied to a last defense: "Was it then a sin to plan for my family? Was I injuring my country by trying to make myself more useful to her?"

"No, I do not say that it amounted to a capital sin, but I do say that your ideals were not the worthiest ones. Christ rebuked men of His own selection because they misunderstood His Kingdom and wanted to have places near Him as the courtiers of an earthly sovereign. To be one of His servants called for self-sacrifice, self-effacement, humble labor, suffering, and, above all, love. You were not without all of these, in part; but that part was the lesser part of a much divided life. There was no taking up the cross for you. You never thought of

doing that. It was the world that had you, and your Master said that He was against the world. Do you now see and understand?"

I bent my head in silence, and did not look at him. He had become only an accusing voice to me, and as such he went on:

"Had you not heard it said that every opportunity is a responsibility? How many opportunities were yours to reach out and teach the truth, and you lost them! When you could have taught truth you taught lies, because you made popular opinions your own to win the crowd. Many times you said publicly what you did not really believe to be true. You did not sift the chaff from the wheat. You were unjust with the injustice of blind ignorance. Yet you were a moral man, a good father, a faithful husband, an example of worldly probity; but you were, nevertheless, also an intellectually dishonest man, a follower of the mob, all the while deceiving yourself with the thought of leading men to better and higher things."

The voice ceased, yet went on echoing within me. I was seeing myself as I sat there with my head sunk upon my breast, the songs of the birds outside no longer heard, the perfume of the flowers in that noble room not reaching me. The life that passed

in review before me was an accusation. Why had I not seen while I lived it? Men had called me a good man. I had believed in a good God but never cared to ask who He was. I had lectured Him, invoked Him as if He were as human as myself. In His Name I had even hated. My God? Who was He? Certainly not the God of the poor, not the God of the meek, not the God of pardon, not the God of charity and kindness who loved the sinner while hating sin. Yes, I had been good in the eyes of men insofar as men could see and judge me. My sin was the sin of the intellect that begets pride. I had been a fraud and never knew it. That was bad, but ignorance might perhaps excuse it. What was harder to excuse was that I never tried to know, never seemed to want to know. Sorrow was in my heart when I looked up. The man was facing me, but his stern, accusing look was gone. There was even joy passing from him to me when, humbly, I asked what I should do.

"You will know what you must do. Look around you. Here are your earthly dreams come true. Were they worth while? Here is two-thirds and more of what you wanted. Would you take it, if you had to live your life over again?"

"No, no, I would not take it."

"There spoke the forgotten part of your ambitions, the spiritual part that you never quite lost. That alone is with you now, and for its sake you must pass through the pain you so carefully avoided while you lived. You could have saved yourself much of it, but you did not. You must learn something that you failed to learn on earth. You must cast away your hates and prejudices, see yourself as you were and as you are. Your soul must become a clean page on which Truth may be written in letters of fire. Are you afraid?"

"I am not afraid."

"Then depart. All that you see here will merge into the darkness out of which all dreams of worldly ambitions are made."

"And you, will you not go with me?"

"I shall live — in you," he answered and was gone.

His voice I still heard speaking within me:

"I was no stranger. From the dawn of consciousness I was with you. I lived as you lived, but with your body I did not die. I shall go on living with you. Freed for the first time, I am your Better Self."

I left the mansion. I left the garden and the trees, and the sense of earth left me as I rushed through

the forest. I had no regrets, for spiritual joy came over me.

I stood alone on the great Plain of Understanding. It stretched far off, this plain without horizon, as if to proclaim itself a kingdom without limits or boundaries. It was bathed in a brighter light than I had seen before. I looked back and saw mansion and garden and forest swallowed in a lake of darkness. Shuddering I turned away, and Rogers was again before me.

"Was our intellectual life not a part of our curse rather than of our blessing?" I said to him, but not to question, rather to confirm.

"The way of the heart was the surer way," he answered. "I would have had less to learn and less to regret had I always followed it rather than the way of the intellect. In the end it was my heart that taught me most of the things I needed to know, that guided my footsteps to the way of peace. But they go together in the good, the heart and the intellect."

IV

The Fog of Ignorance

We never see the stars
Till we can see naught but them. So with truth.

THOMAS BAILEY

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FOG OF IGNORANCE

A MIST seemed to be around Rogers, a mist that became thicker as we walked on. The Plain became dim to my sight as though a cloud had dropped down upon it. Soon I could see only Rogers and him but faintly, but he kept hold of my hand and I did not stumble or fall.

"You must be full of courage now, Bradford," he said, "for you have difficult experiences to meet; but you will come out of each safe, and wiser. Of that I am certain. Do you not note the fog, and that it becomes thicker?"

"I can barely see you through it," I answered.

"Soon," he said, "you will not see me at all or even feel the touch of my hand, but I shall not be far away. Ask no questions of me. You must learn for yourself."

He dropped my hand and the fog fell thicker. I could see nothing but the mist. A silence profound and awful was over the Plain. I heard Rogers' voice whisper: "Walk on without fear till someone again touches your hand. Trust him."

The last word trailed off as if he had gone far from me. I walked on, stumbling constantly, how long I did not know. It seemed like hours and hours. The fog never lifted.

I was filled with loneliness and dread before I heard whispering voices. They were grateful to my ears after the silence.

"This way," said one close to me.

I turned and followed till I heard another voice behind me:

"No. You are wrong. This is the way."

Irresolute, I stopped, and the silence began to fill me with apprehension.

The second voice spoke again: "Turn and follow me."

I turned and took a step in the direction of that voice; but the first spoke once more: "Did you not hear? Follow me."

I put out my hand but touched nothing.

"Look, he wants to be led," said a voice that I had not heard before. "He wants to be led now, he who always wanted to lead."

Many voices broke through the silence coming at me from every side, urging, begging, commanding, praying, laughing, weeping, shouting, whispering that I should follow them. They broke in on one

another. I stopped, confused, not knowing which one I should answer. I wanted to escape from all of them and seek the silence, but they deafened my ears. I heard one that seemed to give me confidence and ran toward it with hands outstretched. Whatever it was it ran faster from me and I could not come close to it; but yet I followed its call until I was tired and despairing. Then another voice attracted me and I ran as I had run before, hands outstretched, but grasped nothing. I do not know how many times this happened before I sank down exhausted on the Plain.

Again the multitude of the voices assailed me. I arose to follow one of them when a feeling came over me like to that which I had experienced when I had seen that spirit who was looking for the Great Darkness. I knew that I was near one of the dreadful lakes. I turned back, unheeding the voice that called me to go on. Many times that terror was repeated before I fell again.

"I shall follow after none of you," I shouted. "I can trust none."

Lying there on the Plain I thought I heard the sound of lapping waves coming nearer, and the feeling of the Great Darkness began anew to creep over me. Horror-stricken I jumped up and rushed,

now after one voice and now after another. I stumbled over stones and the roots of trees. Once it seemed as if I were in a grove of scrub palmettos such as I had known in Florida, full of crawling roots interlaced with one another as they grew above and below the ground, rising and falling like nests of monster snakes. They tripped me again and again. Each time that I rose I reached out for that promised hand, but it was never there to meet me.

The thought came over me to pray. I did not seem to know how. I stood stock still while the voices fairly screamed around me. That thought of prayer seemed to irritate them, but I kept it, helplessly at first, but persistently. Then little by little I heard the voices fading. I knew that I was powerless and weak. I had no atom of pride or presumption left in my soul. Stronger came the urge to pray, but I asked myself to whom should I pray. I could not answer my own question but I felt that some power had intervened for me. Another voice, wordless, was speaking to me, whispering to my heart, to my soul, to my mind. It seemed to say: "You are not neglected and alone. Messengers have gone from before My Face. Lights have burned to show the way. The beacons never quite died." Down I

fell on my knees and the prayer came: "Help me, Lord. Help me. I am in need."

Then I felt the promised hand in mine, and looked up to gaze into the face of a stranger. I had thought to meet the smile of Rogers, and feel his kindly guidance, but this man I had never seen before. Yet he looked at me with the same kindness that I had expected to see on the face of my friend.

The man was straight and spare. Much fasting had worn away almost all the flesh from him. He was travel-stained as if he had been on a long journey. He wore a dress like that of the Chinese, and on his head was the strange feather-topped hat I had seen in the pictures of that people. His eyes, too, were theirs. His finger-nails were long and curled inward toward the palms of his hands. But his dress was rich and not unbecoming. His whole bearing was that of a holy man, a gentleman and a man of learning. Who he was I could not even surmise.

He held my hand tightly and led me on till I saw the mist lighten and begin to dissolve. I felt safe and looked at my deliverer.

He smiled at me and said: "Well done. This trial is over. Shall I teach you the lesson of it?"

I did not speak, but he understood.

"You have been," he said, "in the Fog of Ignorance where the most of mankind were in the ages that intervened between the Promise and the Fulfillment. I too had followed these voices in the fog, but I learned on earth much that you have learned only here, not very much but enough to be a humble guide for others. My errors were forgotten in the great truth that I grasped and taught. Even as you did just now, I called on earth to the Heaven-King. The simple truth I taught, that He lives and reigns, brought forth a great civilization. There is your way." He pointed toward a break in the fog. "Go straight on. I cannot go with you yet. There are others of your world who will need the help of one of those they called heathens."

"Who, then, are you who claim to be a heathen but have thus befriended me, an unworthy Christian?"

"Say rather of yourself," he said, "that you are one who thought himself to be a Christian, but who knew not the way of the Christian, since you would not let the Christ tell you of Himself."

"But who, who," I urged, "are you?"

"Would it not humiliate you to be taught by one who himself saw only through a glass very, very darkly, and then but one truth out of many?"

"No," I answered vehemently. "And if it did it would be good for me thus to be humiliated. Tell me who you are."

The man turned toward the break in the fog that was now becoming wider and wider. I could see the blue through it.

"I am one of those who spoke a message of hope without knowing fully how great the message was," he answered. "Go on in peace, friend. I am only one of the wise men of dark days whose wisdom now is excelled by that of the little child who learns to whisper 'Our Father' at its Christian mother's knee, and thus answers the first of all questions, 'Who is God?' "

He left me and I walked forward with my face toward the blue that beckoned me out of the mist.

V

The Chasm of Hatreds

To do him any wrong was to beget
A kindness from him, for his heart was rich —
Of such fine mould that if you sowed therein
The seed of Hate, it blossomed Charity.

TENNYSON

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHASM OF HATREDS

ROGERS stood with me where an enormous chasm stopped further progress. I could not at once grasp the wonder of its size, its terrible and repellent ugliness. The horror and might of it grew on me as I gazed over it and down into it. The only earthly memory that came to help me was that of my first sight of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. But the Grand Canyon had inspired me with its beauty and sublimity when, at El Tovar, I had been entranced by the play of colors on the sides of that mighty chasm. They gave me the thought of pretty little children playing with giants. Here in this chasm there were no bright colors. A dark cloud which, strangely enough, did not hide the jagged walls, covered everything. My vision went through it but received no pleasure in the passing. The sides of the Grand Canyon were beautiful in their ruggedness. The sides of this chasm were rugged in their ugliness. At El Tovar I had caught glimpses of a winding, playing river a mile below. At this chasm I could see no river; but a sound came up to me like the sound of waters

that roar over a hundred cataracts and rush on to an unknown sea. At El Tovar the Grand Canyon seemed to have been made by the action of the waters of countless ages, teasing and persuading nature for once to show herself in her most sublime beauty. This chasm was cut by the hands of men. I saw their marks on its sides. I could trace their work and note how deep each one had dug; here only a little, but there hundreds of feet at every effort. Surely a race of supermen must have been digging here with machines so gigantic in size as to be beyond every possible flight of human imagination. I felt the thought running through me that here the impossible had been born and had lived, for I saw a grandeur that was debasing, a sublimity that was despicable and a beauty that was revolting.

My vision lifted to gaze at the other side where what Rogers said was still the Plain of Understanding stretched far and wide beyond that vision's power to reach. It was full of light. It began in what appeared to be a great wall of transparent whiteness. So much did that light resemble a wall that I lifted my eyes to follow it to a summit. There was no summit. It was lost in the impenetrable. But I knew that it was lost only to my

THE CHASM OF HATREDS

Rogers stood with me when an enormous chasm stopped further progress. The horror and might of it grew on me as I gazed over it and down into it.

limited vision. I sought its depth, and saw that it became brighter and more beautiful in the distance. In the very midst of it was a palace that lifted a great dome upward, a shining palace and a blazing dome. I forgot the chasm that barred my way to it. No tongue could tell my longing to reach it. That longing was a pain and a joy, both so exquisite that I wondered how it was possible to bear them and live, that I did not die in their thraldom.

Rogers spoke and I reluctantly turned to hear him.

"We must pass over this chasm," he said, "or we stay here where the Great Darkness may open up before us at any time."

"But," I objected, "we cannot pass over it without a bridge, and what bridge could span that awful distance?"

"We make our bridges," he answered, "and no one crosses but on his own. Begin to build yours."

"Out of what?" There was a note of despair in my voice as I asked the question.

"Out of what you brought with you," he said. "We made the chasm and must cast back into it all that we dug out of it. It is the Chasm of Human Hatreds. Let us begin to make our bridges."

"Where can I find my hatreds?" I begged.

"They are in you, all of them. The smallest one that you had on earth when you were a boy you still have, unless you flung it aside and it came back here on wings of love. Think back, you will find them all."

"Here," I cried, "here is one. I know it. It is a dislike I had for a friend twenty-five years ago, but it is so small that I cannot hope it will help very much."

There was a black mass in my hand. I was about to cast it over when I hesitated an instant.

"He never apologized," I thought. "How can I fling this away? He was a hateful man. But look," I said aloud, "look how it grows."

"Yes," said Rogers. "It grows, now that you begin to know it as it really is and to debate with yourself about casting it away. Fling it down into the abyss."

"I cannot. It grows too heavy."

"There was One who said: 'Father, forgive them.' "

With a mighty heave I thrust the black thing from me. I heard it strike below and saw the bottom of the Chasm rising out of the void right below where I stood. I had miscalculated the power of even a tiny hatred.

One by one my other hatreds came out of me, little hatreds and great ones. I flung them all down into the depths, and each time I cast one over, I saw the floor rise higher and higher as if to meet my good will and invite me to go on with my work. The multitude of my hatreds and my prejudices astonished me. It seemed as if I must have been digging this Chasm every day I passed on earth. I recognized each hatred as it appeared in my spirit hands to be cast away. Petty grudges came out, with greater misunderstandings long forgotten but never forgiven.

One strange thing I could not help but note: The harder it was to throw the ugly things into the abyss the more space they filled when, at last, they reached the bottom. One of my hatreds was for a brother who, I believed, had taken for himself the lion's share of my father's estate. It seemed certain to me that he had cheated the other members of his family. I represented them in the court proceedings that followed. None of us ever spoke or wrote a word to that brother again. We had all felt justified in breaking with him. I had tried over and over again to persuade myself that I was right, but I had never quite succeeded. I tried to forget, but forgetting had no effect now, for this

hatred too came out bigger and blacker than the others. I tried to shake it off my hands, but it stuck tenaciously. I felt the old rancor, and instantly the ugly mass began to grow. It weighed me down and seemed to be dragging me toward the edge. I looked over and saw the Great Darkness begin to gather and the floor recede. Then I knew, and made a mighty effort. The mass went over the edge of that terrible abyss. It filled up more space than all the rest that I had thrown in.

How long we toiled I do not know. Somehow time seemed to count not at all, and once I found myself asking what had become of time. There was always light, though no sun shone above us. We did not feel the need of sleep and rest; indeed the work itself seemed to rest us and fill us with increasing strength as we labored. Rogers had finished his bridge when my part of the Chasm was only half filled. My heart told me that something was wrong.

"There is another hatred that dares not even show itself," suggested Rogers. "Pray that it may."

"But how can I know what it is," I asked, "if I am not conscious that it exists? Perhaps it is a hatred that was justified before God."

"Are there such?"

"Come over here to me," called out a voice, "and I will show you a hatred worth your trouble. Come over here and listen to some of your own teachings."

I obeyed and left my task for the moment. As I passed along the edge of the Chasm toward the voice, I saw that there were countless others working even as I had been doing. The voice spoke again. It was that of a soul I knew, a confidant of mine long dead, a strong, stubborn man, fanatical but honest, ignorant but loyal. I had learned early in our relations that his was a religion that hated sin rather than loved virtue. Indeed he practised virtue more out of his hatred for its opposite than for his own intrinsic good. We had many discussions and he abandoned religion altogether. Now I saw him at the very edge of the Chasm, but I could see, too, the darkness gathering near him. His spirit hands were glued to a great mass of the most horrible and the blackest kind of hate. None of my hatreds was like that one, bad as now I knew them to be.

"So you want to know what particular hatred is holding back your bridge, eh?" He spoke with bitterness.

I answered gently: "I should like to know."

"Do you perhaps recognize this one that threatens to be my ruin?"

"No, I do not know it. Try hard to fling it over. I succeeded with one that almost made me despair."

"I, too, might have succeeded had I not seen you succeed. This one is my hatred of you. I can't let it go."

"Of me? But what did I ever do to you that you should hate me so bitterly?"

"You lied to me. You planted a lie in me to grow other lies. I believed you. Now I hate you. I can't get rid of that hatred. When I think of what your lying made me do to innocent people, even here I fill with rage. Oh, I was honest enough about it, because I believed you. But how honest were you?"

"I, too, was honest."

"You may have been, but you were a man of education and I was not. You could have learned the truth. You had opportunities to enlighten yourself. I could scarcely read, much less understand. Why did you try to make such men as I follow a road the end of which you did not know?"

"I knew."

"Who told you?"

"Books and teachers."

"A case of the blind leading the blind, and here is the ditch."

He was right. I had not known, but I knew now that by my fault this man was in peril. Could I aid him? I fell before him. Someone seemed to be dictating a prayer to me and I spoke it. It was a confession and an appeal for pardon.

"Hate me no more for I confess my sin against you," I said. "Let me help you cast that terrible thing into the Chasm."

For a moment he seemed hard, but only for a moment.

"Together then," he cried, "let us try."

And together we flung the hate into the void. To his joy it filled it. "My bridge is made," he said. "Come, I shall help you make yours."

He came back with me and I called my bitterest hatred out of its place in my soul. How terrible it looked as it grew in my hands. And to think I had made it in the name of a loving God. Filthy with lies, foul with slander, reeking with calumny, it grew to be a monster before the frightened eyes of all the spirits working near me. The soul I had helped worked with me, but the hatred would not budge. We toiled and toiled till despair seized me again. I fell down and cried. It was then that

Rogers came over from his own finished work. There was now something that I had not seen before in Rogers. I had known, of course, he was a priest, but that had meant little. Now it seemed to mean a great deal for I turned to him in confidence, I who had so often spoken against such as he. If he would be revenged, here was an opportunity to gloat over the damnation of one of the bitterest enemies of his kind. But there was no sign of gloating in Rogers, for he came to my side with a smile and put one finger on the ugly thing with which I struggled. It jumped from his touch, rolled to the brink of the abyss and fell over.

Rogers turned toward me and said: "All things yield to the tears of repentance and the touch of pardon."

My bridge was made.

VI

The Three Doors

Thou art the Way.
Hadst Thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If Thou hadst ever met my soul.

MEYNELL

CHAPTER SIX

THE THREE DOORS

WE HAD not gone far on the other side of the Plain before the towers of the Palace of Truth that I had seen across the Chasm rose right before us.

Rogers pointed to them saying: "There we part again."

"It has been a great wonder to me, Rogers," I said, "that you know your way so well and are able to instruct me. Where and when did you learn about these things?"

He answered: "The time has not even yet come when that is to be made known to you, but this I may say: That we bring here with us whatever knowledge we had gained on earth that is of spiritual value."

"But, Rogers — and I say it with no thought of boasting, I assure you — my knowledge could scarcely have been greatly inferior to your own."

"That difficulty also," he said gently, "will be clear to you when we reach the Palace of Truth. It is at its gates that our knowledge is to be tested. I spoke of the knowledge that is of spiritual value."

"It always seemed to me as if knowledge, even such as we had on earth, and I admit now that it was small, would be the foundation of the higher knowledge that is part of man's spiritual reward."

"That is correct," he said, "but you do not distinguish. There is knowledge fit to be the foundation of spiritual enlightenment, and there was, not is, a knowledge that served no spiritual end. The latter played its part, and for us it is dead."

We were in front of the Palace. I scarcely heard Rogers' last remark, so rapt was I in admiration of the marvel before me. Describe it I cannot. No words, and how I feel the inadequacy of words, could give the faintest idea of its beauty. It rose from what appeared to be a foundation of solid rock that, to spirit eyes which absorbed rather than saw, was so hard that no mark could be made in it by any force whatsoever. The rock was smooth and bright as if polished by the labor and the skill of ages. It looked like crystal, but crystal so thick that, unlike the crystal I used to know, sight could not pierce it. Rising out of it, the walls seemed to grow, as it were, of their own accord and just as a plant grows from its roots. It was truly a Palace not made by hands. The walls went straight up without ornament or design. I could not help

remembering, as I looked at them, how I had always thought simplicity to be much more beautiful than lavish ornamentation. Here was the glorious beauty of simplicity in perfection. Such walls could be reared only to enclose some great and eternal treasure. The straightness of their upward thrust held me. It was a straightness without the slightest defect. Indeed the walls did not need to depend for their beauty on anything else. Ornamentation would have destroyed it. They appeared to be made out of the same crystal as the rock, but, as the light bathed them, many-colored tints played over them like a clear-cut and super-brilliant rainbow. I found myself thinking of the red as devotion, the blue as hope, the orange as glory, the violet as majesty, the indigo as wisdom, the green as promise, the yellow as royalty. A great dome rose out of the roof, and over it shone an orb and cross of a brightness that, though a thousand times more brilliant than the dazzling light on the Plain, yet did not hurt the spiritual vision, but rather invited it on them to rest. There were three doors to the Palace, all reached by a flight of steps which seemed made of the finest and purest onyx.

We were ascending the steps before Rogers spoke again.

"The steps," he said, "are the steps of Humility and these doors all admit to the vestibule of the Palace. They are closed, but the one by which you may enter will open at your touch. Here I leave you. You must find your door alone."

I turned to ask a question but he had gone.

I looked over each door. On the lintel of the first I read: The Door of Knowledge; on that of the second: The Door of Wealth; but over the third door nothing was written. It was a small door, perhaps a foot and a half high.

As I stood before these doors I felt a Presence near me, standing at my right side. I turned and instantly fell down before It, covering my eyes; but the Presence raised me up, saying: "Only to the Eternal should you give worship. I too am a creature. You should have known me, for I am your own Angel."

I gazed into his radiant countenance a long time before I could stammer: "How should I know you?"

"From the day of your birth on earth," he answered, "I was with you. My voice was ever in your ear though seldom did you hear it. You were busy with many things, some of them evil. Advance to the door of your choice. Which shall it be?"

I considered long and anxiously before I answered: "I was not thought one of the ignorant on earth. Surely I have a right to try the Door of Knowledge."

Before I could take a step forward I saw another spirit pass me and advance toward that door. I knew him at once, for on earth he had been the janitor of my dormitory at college, an illiterate man. I thought he must be making a mistake and called out to him:

"William, do not try that door."

He turned for a moment to smile a greeting but did not stop nor speak. His hand barely touched the Door of Knowledge when it sprang open. Without a backward glance, he entered, and the door closed behind him. The incident gave me confidence. I stepped forward and touched the door as he had done. It did not move. I gently pushed it but it remained firm. I looked for a latch or a lock, but there was neither the one nor the other. Then exerting all my strength, I pushed against it, but the door did not yield.

I turned to the Angel in my distress: "Was my knowledge then the vain kind that is destroyed? The world did not think that of it. I was taught to believe that it alone was worth the best in me."

"Who taught you that?" the Angel asked.

"The whole world of civilization. It was the cry of scholars over all the earth. They worshiped knowledge as a god."

"Before them," the Angel said sadly, "other men worshiped false gods. Can you now, with your spiritual vision, see any relation between the wisdom of the earth and the wisdom you need here? You were a learned man there. Did your earthly learning open the Door of Knowledge for you?"

"It helped me to live better and make more out of the life that was given me."

"It could have done all of that for you and still be worthless here. Indeed it was made to do it. For thousands it did do it. But all these thousands did not make it the end for which they strove, but rather a means to reach higher and holier knowledge. Did you not see, back there, on the Plain of Understanding, one of the most brilliant of your scholars seeking the Great Darkness?"

"I saw, but even yet I do not fully understand. And why did an illiterate man find entrance by that door when I could not?"

"True, he was illiterate in the fact that he could neither read nor write," said the Angel. "But he learned what he needed to fill his humble niche in

life, and something more. He learned about himself. He knew his place in the scheme of the Eternal. He was happy to know it and to be in it. He learned how to serve his Maker. He was willing to be taught. So he knew what here is worth knowing. He had faith in his Master's word and that is the cornerstone of knowledge."

"It is not yet clear to me." I knew that I spoke as one troubled. "I have passed over the Plain of Understanding and yet do not understand this."

"Understanding is not all," replied the Angel. "There is something higher than understanding. It is called enlightenment. All that you learned on the Plain of Understanding you could easily have learned by using your intellectual powers on earth. With understanding you could have known of your dependence on God, of His justice, of His wisdom, of what manner of creature you were and are. You did not need a divine revelation to teach you these things. Following the simple rules of correct thinking would have given you a grasp on them. There is more to knowledge than that, for there is the spiritual enlightenment to which I referred. The Master went about on earth to give man enlightenment by revelation. He provided that it would re-

main on earth, intact for man, as long as the earth itself remained. It was stopped from approaching you."

"Stopped?"

"Yes, by the greatest enemy of man, once the only enemy of the angels, pride."

I had no other word to say, but the Angel went on speaking: "Pride is a sinister foe. You despised it in its simpler forms and embraced it in its most dangerous ones. You despised those who were vain of personal appearance, those who by artificial means tried to be attractive to others. But that form of pride was far less to be feared, though it was sinful, than the pride which grows out of human respect. That is the coward's pride and the most despicable. You had it, though it never quite conquered you. You followed the crowd, but your talents were those of leadership. You could have influenced thousands for the true and the good and failed to do so. You took the word of scoffers as justification for scoffing yourself. You almost denied God because you thought the scientific world had given Faith its death-blow. Faith is man's act of saving humility before the Maker who wrote His Name on His creation so plainly that all could read it if they would."

The Angel stopped and silently pointed to the Door of Wealth. I understood.

"That door I surely can open," I said confidently.

No sooner had I spoken than I saw another spirit pass me and go toward that door. He had been a beggar on earth and I had kept the life in his twisted body by my bounty. When I died he may have been forgotten by others and thus starved. Remembering my lesson at the Door of Knowledge, I said nothing as he smiled at me in passing. He touched the Door of Wealth and it opened for him.

"Go you now," said the Angel, "and try."

I had little heart in me to do it, but I obeyed. I touched the Door of Wealth. It did not move. I gently pushed it but it remained firm. In despair I threw all my strength against it, but the door did not open to me. I turned back to the Angel, who was gazing at me, I thought, with pity.

"My wealth," I said sadly, "seems to be as ineffective as my knowledge."

"Have you wealth?" he asked. "Give me then a single penny and the door will open."

I could not give it, I, the millionaire. I realized that nothing I had possessed on earth was mine now.

"What wealth had the beggar who passed in so easily?" I questioned.

"He brought here," replied the Angel, "a wealth of patient suffering, a wealth of humiliations silently borne in life for the love of God, a wealth of devotion, a wealth of prayer, a wealth of good example. He was rich in virtue. That kind of wealth passes current in the Kingdom of God. Will you try the other door, the little one? It is that of Power."

"I have no power," I answered.

"But you had it on earth?"

"Such power as I had carries no more value here than my knowledge and my wealth."

"How do you know that?"

"I have learned it — at last."

"You are right. Look now at the Door of Power."

I looked and saw again that it was very small, so small that no grown man could enter by it. The Angel did not wait for the question I was ready to ask.

"It would have been closed and locked to you," he said, "had you tried to enter it by right of any power that you had on earth except that which came to you from humble service in God's name. Enough of that you have. Enter now."

I gazed at the tiny door. It opened as I looked at it, but how could I enter by a door so small?

"It is impossible," I sadly replied. "No one but a child could enter by it."

"Not impossible." His voice was soft as he added: " 'Unless ye become as little children ye shall not enter the Kingdom of God.' Do these words of the Master convey no meaning to you who have confessed that you have no power?"

The truth flashed upon me. I dropped on my knees and there lay prostrate, not daring to raise my eyes. I crawled to that tiny door and passed through it as a child, for a child I had become. I had no thought of entering the Palace as a man of knowledge or of wealth, but only as one of His little ones.

I stood upright in the Palace of Truth.

VII

The Scoffers

Studious they appear
Of arts that polish life, inventors rare,
Unmindful of their Maker, though His spirit
Taught them, but they His gifts acknowledged none.

MILTON

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SCOFFERS

BEFORE me as I entered I saw a flight of steps leading downward and Rogers standing on the topmost.

"I had hoped to meet you, Rogers," I began.

"It is good to see you here" — his voice was grave — "and to know that when we part again it will make little difference to either of us."

"Our parting will never now be a matter of indifference to me," I said warmly.

"The friendships of Eternity, my dear Bradford," he replied, "differ from those of time in this: that the love in them passes from friend to friend through the purifying furnace of the love of God. On earth they pass through the imperfections of human weaknesses. Here they are directed first to the Perfect and in Him are perfected."

He beckoned me to follow him down the steps. At the bottom I found myself gazing at the foundation walls of the Palace of Truth.

To my astonishment I saw many spirits working outside the foundation walls with sharp instruments. I say "outside" because all of them seemed to be in

what looked like an excavation level with the floor of the basement. The spirits I saw were those of men and women, though of the latter there were not so many as there were men. I noticed that fact at once and asked Rogers the reason why men predominated in this bitter work.

"Women," he answered, "have not had, as a rule, as many sins of the intellect to expiate as men. They go to God by the surer way of the heart."

"But these," I asked, "are not these the great ones of the earth? Surely I have seen pictures of most of them."

"You have," he replied. "They, all of them, had places in the galleries of fame. Go and speak to any you wish to address. It is permitted."

As I approached the nearest group, I noticed another strange thing. The foundation walls of the whole Palace of Truth were at least twenty feet above the floor and the building rested its crystal walls on nothing that I could see. Nevertheless the spirits kept striking with their instruments at the space beneath the walls as if strong blocks of granite were before them. Their picks swung with amazing regularity and mighty force; but every one of them stopped, bounding violently back from the place where the sustaining wall should have been. It was

as if these men were striking at thin air, yet actually encountering resistance. I stood and watched without understanding what it all meant. There were no sounds when the picks touched the invisible resistance. The spirits never spoke to one another; never stopped the regular swing of their sharp tools. I tried to catch a glimpse of some sustaining pillar holding up the Palace, and walked along the sides to find the secret of this marvel, but there were neither pillars nor any other visible support. All I could see was the crystal wall of the superstructure, bare and polished, apparently resting on nothing, and these spirits, many clad in strange garments, picking and picking at the seemingly empty space as if it were as strong and solid as the walls of a fortress. Then I remembered that Rogers had told me that I might speak to them if I wished.

The spirit I approached was not prepossessing. He was small, thin, emaciated and indescribably ugly; but there was sharpness and even the fire of genius in his brilliant eyes. His visage was twisted into a peculiar sneer that seemed to be frozen on it. But he laughed as he swung his iron tool, laughed as he raised it, and laughed again as it bounded back — shaking his whole body — from the invisible foundation. I knew who he was. I had read his

writings and had seen his portrait, but I had loved neither the one nor the other. Both had repelled me from this changeable, insincere, malevolent character who had died decades of years before I was born. But I knew that he, of all the workers here, could best give me the information I craved.

"Why," I asked, "do you strike at nothing, you whose life was passed in striking at everything that men held sacred?"

He looked sharply at me without ceasing to swing his pick. The sneer stayed on his face. His little eyes were half covered as the lids went down in a gaze of concentrated hate.

"Why do I strike at nothing? You poor fool, would *I* strike at nothing? Did *I* ever strike at nothing? Did *I* ever want to strike at nothing? Shall *I* ever want to strike at nothing? Is there such a thing as nothing at which to strike? Where then is nothing?"

"You ought to know," I answered. "You told the world of your day that there was nothing."

"I told it no such thing. I said that if there were no God we would have to invent Him; but I did not invent Him. Does one invent one's enemy?"

"You have not answered my question," I urged. "I see nothing to strike at. Do you?"

"I do not need to see. I strike at what I know is there. Strange, is it not," and a faint trace of gravity passed over his face, "strange that one who sneered at Faith should have so much of it now to sneer at in himself?"

"If you have so much, why then do you sneer?"

"Because it was my will to sneer, as it was my will to strike. I go on doing that which it was the free choice of my will to do. I shall go on doing it, sneering at what I cannot see but what I know exists, striking at what is invisible to me but what I know to be the Great Living Reality."

"And these others, who are they?"

"A most distinguished gathering, Monsieur, the sneerers of the earth. There are all kinds of them here, philosophers predominating; but we are poets, too, and rhetoricians of the ancient schools, priests of Baal and of Jupiter, sun-worshiping sacrificers of Persia, animal-worshiping sacrificers of Egypt. We are of every land and century, we, the mockers at God."

"And thus He punishes you?"

"Fool, do you not even yet understand? Thus we punish ourselves."

"But by His ordinance?"

"Perhaps, but also by our own. He did not compel us to hate Him. In our souls we rooted that hate by our own will and by our own acts. By personal choice we brought it with us when we came here. We have what we desired to have, what we selected, what we would not be without."

"Would you not be glad to be without it now, rather than continue in this vain task?"

"Is it a vain task eternally to vindicate Justice?"

I left him and asked no more questions. None of the others even glanced at me. In spite of the constant striking, the vast place was as silent as the grave. I returned to Rogers. He had spoken to none of the spirits.

"They seem to know that there is some support for these walls," I said to him, "yet they certainly cannot see it any more than I can."

"Neither of us has yet the fulness of vision," he replied. "The walls have a support that no power can ever undermine."

"What is it?"

"The Word of Him who is the Pillar and Ground of Truth."

"Did these not know that?"

"They knew."

"And knowing did not understand?"

"And knowing did understand."

"Why then did they sneer and strike?"

"Ask that of the deep and dark caverns of human malevolence and your voice will come back to you echoed from their flinty walls."

VIII

The Lords of Selfishness

The huge army of the world's desires.

SHAKESPEARE

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LORDS OF SELFISHNESS

"ROGERS," I spoke sadly, "I am learning terrible things."

"Bradford, you are only beginning to learn, but the things are not terrible. It would be terrible if Eternal Justice had no better vindication than men could offer. It is just that the deceivers of their fellows should have deceit for their portion; that pride of intellect should be its own punishment. But have you not overlooked something?"

"What?"

"Did you not notice the procession passing behind these scoffing men? Look again."

I looked and saw a strange sight. Behind those who were swinging their picks and striking at the invisible wall, passing along in the same direction and one after the other, were men weighed down by other men. Each carried another on his back.

"Go close to the excavation, down where there is no one working, and you will be near enough to see and even to question the souls in that procession."

Rogers indicated such a place not far off and to it I went. Rogers did not move to accompany me.

I had made no mistake in thinking the procession a strange one, but I had not seen all the reasons why it was so. There seemed to be no end to the passing of men and women, each one carrying another. What I had not noticed was the fact that each burden was the double of the one who bore it, man or woman, in all things, face, color, dress, appearance, exactly duplicating the struggling and panting marcher; but the double was lifeless. Each marcher carried what seemed to be a dead replica of himself or herself.

Not one of the marchers paid the slightest attention to me. They were of all ages, appearances and costumes. Like the workers with the picks, they seemed to be of every generation in the world's history. An Egyptian priest marched in front of an Indian rajah. A man in the fur tippet of Tudor times followed a gentleman in the evening dress of our day, covered with decorations. There were marchers who wore crowns and coronets. I saw sacred headdresses too. But whatever each one wore, it was matched by his dead burden. Even the tiniest bit of ornamentation on so small a thing as a ring was duplicated.

It was a sad sight to see that interminable line of marching men and women, all intent on nothing but

their own burdens, which in every instance seemed so much a part of the one who carried it that I could not detect the slightest slip from the bent shoulders, or a single attempt to readjust the weight. That the burdens were even more than ordinarily heavy was shown by the uneven gait of the marchers, their panting chests and the pain written on their set faces. Many staggered against those before or behind them, but there was no show of apology on the one side or of pardon on the other. Only ugly snarls of annoyance and convulsive grips to hold tighter the burdens, marked such mishaps. The marchers had not the slightest interest in one another.

I recalled that Rogers had told me that I might address some of them and I selected one who was approaching the place where I stood. I waited till he had come in front of me and greeted a man of distinguished appearance, very much the scholar type. To my astonishment he did not even glance at me when I spoke, but passed on as if he had not heard me. I tried another, this time a woman, with the same result.

"No need to try again, Bradford." Rogers was at my elbow. "No need to try again. I wanted you to speak so that you might know for yourself how

thoroughly they are detached from everything but their burdens. Did you know any of them?"

"Not one."

"Perhaps, if you could remain here for awhile, you would recognize a few."

"But who are they?"

"One might call them the world's benefactors. Indeed that is how the memory of most of them is kept alive on earth. They were for the most part doers of great deeds. Some governed empires, kingdoms, churches, states. Some wrote books that will live as great literature. Some sang songs that will go echoing through the world till Judgment. Some dug wealth out of the earth. Some invented seeming miracles. Some were leaders in business: captains of industry we used to call them. And then some were just humble people whose fame was great enough to cover only a village or a rooftree."

"Not the kind one might expect to see toiling and suffering like that," I ventured.

"No," Rogers answered sadly. "Of them better things might have been expected, but the better things failed to come out of their lives. You see, Bradford, they mistook the object of their burden-bearing and mistook it wilfully. To their fellow-men they were laborers for human progress, peace

and culture; but they themselves thought of these only incidentally. What they really wanted was power or fame or riches. In spite of the number you see, they are not such a large proportion of the people of their class. This procession is made up of the selfish ones of the earth in every age; those who never did anything but what was for their own benefit; those who, in spite of the incidental good they might have accomplished, yet never had a thought of love for others. All of them ought to be crowned, for you have seen the Lords of Human Selfishness."

"But why will they not speak?"

"They have neither time nor words but for themselves. You are powerless to do anything for them, so they want nothing to do with you."

"And what is that strange burden that each one carries?"

"Himself or herself."

"But it seems to be dead."

"It is dead. It was dead before they left the earth."

Saying this he moved toward the stairway by which we had descended. I followed him up to the first floor of the Palace of Truth.

IX

The Walls of Truth

Truth is the highest thing that man may keep.

CHAUCER

CHAPTER NINE

THE WALLS OF TRUTH

MY FIRST impression of the interior of the Palace of Truth was that of vastness. It was not divided into rooms but was, itself, a single room, a majestic hall with galleries and alcoves, but with nothing shut off from the rest that I could see. Its vastness was in width, length, height — everything. I walked over to the far side, opposite the door by which I had entered, but as I approached the wall it seemed to recede from me. I asked Rogers if it was an illusion or if the wall really receded.

He gave me this answer: "Truth is as limitless as the Eternal Perfection of which it is but a single manifestation."

"But do these walls really recede?" I urged, not understanding that he had already answered my question.

"The space they enclose," he replied, "is limited for each according to his capacity and his desires. We seem to make our own walls for this Palace, but when we think that we are about to touch them, we find that, as barriers to knowledge, they are

untouchable. On earth you knew that knowledge had its limits, yet no mortal had ever exhausted earth knowledge. You are no longer on earth. You deal here with the truly illimitable. You live in the spirit and you are not to see through a glass darkly, but face to face. If you had acquired all the knowledge that the earth held, you would not have had any more than a preparation for what you are to gain here. Knowledge as such is replaced. What we learn in this Palace is from the light of the aurora of the Beatific Vision. It is useless to try to touch that wall. It does recede — into infinity."

As I listened, gazing at the wall, I noticed that, while I had not been able to see through its crystal loveliness from without, it was endowed from within with such a pure and perfect clarity that I wondered how I had received the impression that it existed at all. I began to doubt that the Palace had any walls; but Rogers shook his head when I told him of my thought.

"It has walls, my dear Bradford, to you and to me and to all created beings — even angels. To the Infinite alone the Palace is spaceless. But the knowledge we here gain is inexhaustible, because it is on His perfections that it feeds for eternity and His perfections are inexhaustible."

"Then we shall forever progress in knowledge?"

"Yes, and in loving what we know."

"That, then, is what is called Heaven? In this eternal absorption of knowledge consists our spiritual happiness?"

"In part. But you are progressing."

"In what does this knowledge consist?"

"As I told you, in the perfections of the Eternally Perfect."

"You mean God?"

"I mean Him whom man, lacking the fulness of understanding, called God, or Jehovah, or any other name that indicated the entire dependence of all things upon Him."

"On earth I have known those who called Him Nature."

"Nature is His slave, an instrument of His will, a servant of His providence."

"I have known those who called Him Liberty."

"The name is a true one. He is Liberty. He is also Virtue, and Wisdom, and Purity, and Justice, and Love. He is all that is good."

"But on earth, to me at least, He was the Inapproachable."

"If to you on earth He was the Inapproachable, it was because you erected a wall against Him."

"I was not conscious of having done so."

"No, you were not, happily for you; but you let others build it. You were what the world called a strong character, Bradford; but how strong were you? Strong enough to be a slave of other men's speculations. In your worldly business you relied on yourself alone. In the business of your soul you relied on the guesses of others."

"Yes, I am quite sure now that I did. I was a busy man. I had no time to go into such deep questions for myself. Most men of my class were in the same position. What could be our guide but what we thought was enlightened public opinion?"

"Was it always satisfactory and satisfying?"

"I confess that it was not, but it was all such men as I had."

"Are you quite sure that it was all?"

"I am quite sure that it was all I knew."

"Did you ever try to learn if there was another guide?"

"I am afraid I did not, but I felt safe in believing that there was no other."

"Yet, you were taught that there was a Book."

"Yes, a Book that I could not understand; a Book with which men buttressed up every religious vagary

in Christendom. I did read it, often, and then rejected it as wholly unsatisfactory. How could a living, working faith be built on documents subject to contradictory interpretations? It was not the law I needed but the interpretation of the law."

"You found no interpreter?" Rogers' eyes were fixed upon me with what I thought was a strange look, but I could not divine the full meaning of it.

"I found a multitude of interpreters but no two of them in agreement."

"What of yourself as interpreter? Were you not taught that truth is free?"

Instantly I realized that I would have answered that question on earth by saying that, for each man, truth was what he conceived it to be, but I knew that here I could give no such answer. I wondered at the one I found myself giving.

"Truth," I said, "cannot be the plaything of every man's fancy. It is what is. My thought of it does not make it, nor my conception of its content change it. It is false to say that truth is free. Truth in truth is a tyrant, but a beneficent and blessed tyrant. I think now that most of man's intellectual mistakes are born of his ignoring that fact."

"Did you then believe that truth, insofar as man could know it, was beyond your reach?"

"If man could know any part of truth, it must have been intended by God that he should have the means to know it."

"Do you think that possibly he did know it, or had it in him to know it, of himself?"

"I think no such foolishness. There were things I knew by instinct, as it were. I knew that God existed, for I felt my own dependence on His power. I knew that He was good, for I was drawn to goodness and away from evil. I knew that He was just, for ideal justice called and all men answered from the pit of their own poor attempts to render justice. I knew vaguely of this life of the spirit, for I felt that the material was corruptible, but true life not subject to the fate of changeable things. There ended the knowledge I had within myself of the things that matter here."

"Did that suffice for your happiness on earth?"

"How could it when my whole being cried for more?"

"Bradford," Rogers bent toward me as he spoke with an intensity I had not seen before in him, "Bradford, answer me this additional question: Would you have followed a teacher if you knew that he had the right to teach?"

"To the ends of the earth and beyond."

"Come then," he said. "Come then, and look to the ends of the earth and beyond."

He drew me with him. It seemed as if we walked very far before he stopped. When he did, he pointed toward the wall before us and bade me gaze through the transparent crystal. I did as directed, but before I could even begin to secure actual impressions of what was before me, I heard music and my whole being became absorbed in listening to it.

X

The Symphony of Worlds

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

MILTON

CHAPTER TEN

THE SYMPHONY OF WORLDS

WHEN I said that I heard music, I was using words to express what is beyond expression in words. What I heard was to me harmony in its essence. I know now, however, that it was as far below that as our earthly conception of great music is below the music that surged over me. It was sweet in that it touched every tender emotion in my nature. It was majestic in that it came to me with the perfect rhythm of the marching of an angelic host. It was thunderous in that it filled the vast space to the exclusion of all else. It seemed, if that were possible, as if it banished and replaced even the air and the light; as if one could breathe it, see it, feel it, and taste it. Yet it was softer than the zephyr, less stirring than air fanned by wings of gossamer. It carried no martial message, no appeal to enthusiasm, no call to tears or to laughter. It did what earth music tries ineffectually to do, it pictured and taught, and no long years of the cultivation of the senses were necessary to understand the message.

Many a thought has been expressed by men the compass of which they themselves died without knowing and realizing. As I listened to that music one of the thoughts spoken by a pagan sage came to me. It pictured Wisdom standing alone, unchangeable and unafraid, amid the ruins of worlds. Instead of Wisdom I thought of the Immortal Soul of Man. The music I heard told me that, for it carried, ever so gently, into every part of my being the realization of the greatness of human dignity. As I listened I saw the human soul, crowned with royalty and reigning over all things material, with visions, longings, ambitions I had never estimated at a millionth part of their true value.

The music was not unfamiliar. I knew I had heard it before, but only as one hears strains in the distance, the air and lilt of which elude him. Thus had I heard this music on earth; but always confounded with earth's noises, and I had not tried to still them. Often had I shut the ears of my soul against this music. I now knew that with sorrow as I listened, enthralled. What I heard was not songs of angels but the Harmony of Created Things.

Rogers woke me from an ecstasy as he touched my hand and pointed toward the crystal wall before

me. Through it I saw the source of the exquisite harmony.

How shall I picture to you what I saw? Imagine a choir of planets, suns, moons and stars, gloriously singing with all the heavens as their stage. Imagine a mighty directing wand of light, like a baton in the hand of the Unseen. That was what I saw. From this came the music that enraptured me. The baton swung rhythmically and the melody followed its every movement so closely that it seemed as if the sounds came from the baton itself. Every move was harmony, every response order. On earth science multiplies its figures over and over again to show the vastness of the spaces filled with swift rolling worlds, and ceases to multiply only when the figures are so many that they no longer mean anything. Had the brain of man been capable of grasping these figures a million times remultiplied by millions, science would still be babbling, Ah! Ah! Ah!

To the eyes of the spirit alone is the material creation visible — all of it. The spirit sees it, for in all its greatness it is still material and of a lower order than the spiritual nature. Only when we are held by the material are we prevented from seeing as the spirit sees. Once released from the material, with the eyes of the spirit we know the inferiority

of matter. I looked at the material creation through the walls of the Palace of Truth somewhat as a collector of butterflies looks at his most gorgeous specimen through his glass, lost in wonder and admiration, yet knowing its littleness and comparative unimportance. Thus I gazed at Creation. I saw it as it is, as it was, and as the orderly ruin that it yet will be when, the aeons of its existence in its present form passed, it will return to the nothingness out of which it was called or give place to greater creations. I saw all the limping truth and all the degrading falsehoods of man-made conceptions of the material works of his Maker. I understood the glory of that evolution which begins with the Creative Thought in which all things are contained, and by which all progress and growth is governed. On earth we see the procession pass. In the spirit we see it, in part at least and progressively, as it is in the mind of God. When we tune our ears to it we hear the music of the spheres as it interprets the Master's composition, one note after the other; but when the spirit hears it, it is not note by note, but in its perfection and unity.

Yet no single melody was lost in the great ensemble. I could hear all and each contribution to the whole. A tiny flute-like sound came to me when

I began to listen for the separate instruments. It was perfect to my ears as it stole out ever so gently and humbly. I turned to ask Rogers what it was.

"It is the song of the earthworm," he answered. "The smallest and least to man has its place in the orchestra, and is of importance equal to the greatest. You may hear others too. Listen, that one is the music of the winged insects; that the music of the growing things, the grasses and the flowers; here comes forth the music of the birds; here that of the creeping reptiles and here that of things inanimate. But do not miss the song of the beasts. It is as perfect as the rest, for its notes are never false, since they are directed by instinct just as the Master wrote them when He gave these humble servants of man life and power to express themselves."

A new element seemed to enter the mighty orchestra. There were breaks in the harmony. I heard false notes struck and sounded. The players quivered. Some were silent. The effect of the false notes appeared to pass from one to the other till all were affected. I found myself affected by them. A shiver passed over me and deep resentment surged up in me. I could not understand, and begged Rogers to explain.

"It is man who thus plays out of tune," he said. "It is man who strikes the false notes."

"Man?" I broke out angrily. "Man? But I have heard perfection from the music of the inanimate, from life without reason. Do reason and freedom offer only discord?"

"Man is free," he answered. "Not even the God who made him so will interfere with that freedom."

"Free to spoil everything?"

Rogers did not seem to hear me. He was speaking as if in meditation: "Man is part of the cycle of life. Creation comes from God and goes back to God. It begins with the inanimate, with earth matter, with air, with light, with the waters. On these the lowly things of life live. In them the inanimate is transformed, for it gives itself to life at its lowest in the vegetative world. That life gives itself to feed the life that is above it, the animal, and there it is transformed into a higher life. By service and by sacrifice the animal life gives itself to human life in which dwells intelligence and freedom. There the crown is put on all material created things. Man is lord and king. We are yet to see the cycle complete."

"But," I persisted, "why the discord?"

"Not always discord. When man so wills he brings forth the greatest and the noblest harmony, but while time is his he is free to bring forth what he wills. Listen now and you will hear the masterpiece."

The music fairly lifted me on a wave of melody. In it the perfect seemed to be surpassing perfection. Rapt in the glory of it I was silent, until new notes of discord were struck and I shuddered out of the trance that had held me.

"What is it that dares intrude its ugliness among such beauty?" I shouted this question to Rogers in indignation.

He bent his head sadly as he answered with one word, the sound of which brought horror to my soul: "Sin."

I was one stunned as by a blow. Then confusion swept over me. Sin? I knew, and stammered out a question, fearing but sure of the answer.

"Mine?"

"Yes, yours, but mine also." Rogers' voice seemed to come out of a depth of sadness. "Yours and mine. We heard only the discords that we two made; only yours and mine, Bradford, only yours and mine."

"I thought," my words came slowly and without conviction, "I thought that mine had injured only myself."

"No man's sins injure only himself. They pass their influence on to others and grow as they pass. They break the harmony that rises from the lips of innocence. Come and see."

He drew me to the other side of the Palace and pointed back over the road by which I had come. There I saw, far over the Plain of Understanding, but clear to my spirit eyes, the world that I had left.

That world looked like a vast prairie with a mountain rising up in the very center of it. On the mountain a city was set. In the center of the city there was a great building that resembled the Palace of Truth. It, too, had on it a dome, and on the dome a cross. From every part of the world the city, the dome and the cross were visible. Streams of water, crystal clear, flowed from the sides of the mountain and down into the world below, so many that they appeared to be innumerable. Now wide and deep, now narrow and shallow, they came within the sight and range of every soul that walked the earth; but, large or small, each stream had its source on the mountain and contained the same water crystal clear. In thousands of places the water gathered in

pools made by the hands of men. In some places there were many such pools but in others only a few; but I could see and hear men where the pools were, urging and pleading that others should be built where there were but few. But the streams flowed everywhere, and everywhere the water could be gathered into the pools once men prepared places for it. At each pool there were those who invited their fellows to come and drink of the waters. Millions did come. As soon as they drank they were transformed before me, for a light that Rogers told me was the Light of Grace shone from them. But there were other millions who did not heed. Some of these averted their eyes as they passed the pools and closed them as they crossed the streams. Some gazed at the waters long and then turned away. Some put their hands over their ears so as to shut out the invitations to drink. Some argued with the men who offered them the water, refused to accept, or spilled it on the ground. Some struck and killed the guardians of the pools. Some made pools of their own away from the streams and into them flowed waters that did not come from the mountain. Men called for others to drink from these and many did. I saw thousands of those who drank from them sicken and die. Around many pools of water from

the mountain there was confusion and the noise of discord, attempts to take the cups held by the guardians out of their hands, but when these attempts were successful I saw the cups fall to pieces before they could be used. The whole world I looked at was divided, not into nations and peoples as I had known its great divisions in life, but into those who drank of the water crystal clear and those who would not drink.

"Tell me, Rogers," I asked anxiously, "what does all this mean?"

"It is," he answered, "the world we left as it is seen from Heaven, a world divided against itself by sin. The streams that come from the 'City set upon a Mountain' are the channels of God's grace to man. They go everywhere, not always wide and deep, but always in sufficiency. Wherever man wills, the water will gather into pools and guardians will be placed over them to invite their fellows to drink and be refreshed for the service of God, which is true life. The guardians are charged to call all within reach of their voices. Some heed, but you have seen what others do. The City set upon a Mountain was builded by the Son of God and in it He placed the inexhaustible fountain of His Father's Truth and Love."

He stopped speaking and gazed down on the scene for a long time, but I was impatient.

"Tell me more, Rogers," I begged.

He lifted his hand for silence, saying only: "Listen."

Then I heard two hymns arising from that world I had left. One was a discordant roar in which was mingled hate and fear, indifference and anger, passion and complaint. I tried to shut out the sound of it but it pierced my defenses and I could not. Some of it came from frenzied mobs that shook threatening fists at the tranquil City set upon a Mountain. At last it faded out of my hearing and gave place to the other, a hymn of praise swelling from the throats of the millions who had drunk of the water crystal clear. It entered through the walls of the Palace of Truth and passed on to join the Harmony of Created Things.

XI

The Mystery of Pain

The prayer of those who suffer has the strength of Love and Death.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

ON A balcony that ran around the interior of the Palace of Truth I stood, with Rogers, again gazing back over the world that I had left. My spiritual eyes searched to see the vast number of people that spread out over it. They did not appear to me as if some were near and some far away, for I could see all of them at once and even, but with difficulty, certain ones in particular. But none was a dim, small object in the distance. If my gaze was directed to any individual in particular, that person stood out at once before me, just as if he were with me in conversation. I cannot explain this strange phenomenon other than to say that great limitations fall before the spiritual vision, though our more general knowledge rarely seeks the minor details. In the spirit we see farther and see deeper, but yet do not see what the Eternal Judge alone has a right to see. Our knowledge is of the body before us, not of the soul; but of that body we do know much when we turn to it. As I gazed outward and back to the earth, nothing that is of earth was forbidden my spiritual eyes.

"You are to behold an appalling sight, Bradford," said Rogers, "but you must not fear it. Indeed there is no reason for fear because the shape of terror that will come before you is not real. It will be necessary that you lose your spiritual vision for a time."

As he spoke he pointed to a dark cloud that seemed to gather right in front of us outside the crystal walls of the Palace. It began to take shape and as it did I felt the fear Rogers spoke of creep over me. It was at first only a vague uneasiness, a sort of portent of coming disaster, even death. My gaze was fastened on the changing cloud. It took on a shape not unlike that of a beast half-human. Then swiftly the cloudy shape was clearly defined and I shrank back to avoid the glaring and threatening eyes that were fastened on me. Rogers put his hand on my shoulder to steady me and I felt myself gradually losing the fear.

The terrible shape that looked so much the beast, but that I felt possessed intelligence far surpassing that of any human, had wings like those I had seen pictured as the wings of an evil spirit. Its body was scaly like that of a serpent. Its face was hideous. Its hands and feet had claws with horrible sharp

nails sticking out of them. It carried a spear pronged like a fork.

As I gazed at it the shape turned around and faced the earth. Swiftly it sprang into the air, fluttered its great wings and darted away. As it hung over the multitudes of living men and women I saw great agitation amongst them, agitation that looked like panic. I could see faces whiten, and I knew that the fear I had felt was over them all to a much greater degree than it had been over me. For a threatening moment the horrid shape hung over the earth and then, like a plummet of lead, it dropped into the very midst of the terror-stricken people. I covered my eyes.

Rogers' hand was again on my shoulder and his voice came reassuringly to me.

"Do not fear to look," he said. "You must see to understand."

Obediently I uncovered my eyes. The monster was thrusting with his forked spear and the people were trying to avoid it. Some, even most of them, succeeded, but not all, for every thrust found a victim. I saw them fall. There were those who rose again, some quickly, but some only after a long time. Some did not rise at all and from their bodies I saw

the spirits come out and float away toward the Plain of Understanding. The monster did not stay in one place. When he had used his spear many times he rose in the air and came down in another place; but it seemed to me that he had the power to be all over the earth at one time, so swift did he go and so rapidly did he do his fearful work.

"You may withdraw your gaze now," I heard Rogers say, and gladly did I do so, turning to him for the explanation I was sure he would give.

"What you saw, Bradford," Rogers said, "was the Spirit of Pain as he appears to mortal eyes. When you look again you will see how these eyes have deceived you. There are those on earth who know the truth in part. They do not fear as do those who do not know. The deeper the life of the soul is lived on earth, the more is known of this spirit, this mystery of pain, a mystery men may solve even before they die. You have heard of saints?"

I nodded and he went on:

"Saints are those who cultivate the spiritual life while still on earth. Their task is to shake off the degrading influences of the flesh. As they succeed in doing that their spiritual vision becomes keener. Only these, but always to a more or less limited

degree, know the mystery of pain in part for what it really is.

"I shall now explain what you have seen in greater detail. Each thrust of the spear produces two separate sufferings, for one fork is that of physical and the other that of mental pain. Usually they go together. All physical pains are essentially alike, though they vary in degrees of suffering; but even these degrees have their uses and are part of the Divine Plan for human governance.

"You first noticed the fear that swept over the earth as the Spirit of Pain hovered above it. That fear is always in man. It tends to keep him physically as well as mentally sound. Without it he would tend to excesses and corruption. The fear is the warning that urges him to use his reason so as to command himself. The brute does not need the warning to the same degree for it is ruled absolutely by its instincts, and they are governed by the Divine Law. But man is free. He would die quickly without the fear that is engendered in him by the Spirit of Pain, and it is one factor that prevents man from passing the effects of his vices on to generation after generation. The Spirit of Pain has its place in keeping the earth an inhabited place in which mortal life

may be lived. The Spirit of Pain is a preserver of mortal life as well as a precursor of death.

"The wounds made by one prong of the spear are sicknesses, most of them warnings that Death may be hovering near, but some are the thrusts of Death itself. The wounds of the other prong are of far greater value. They touch the soul and awaken longings that the life of the world, with its pleasures and its cares, succeeded in putting to sleep. The end of these longings is God, the Eternal Perfection. Pain has power to cut the soul's connection with material things so that man may see the futility of relying on them for his joy. In pain they fail and even betray him. This truth he knows without pain, but not often does he act according to his knowledge. As in pain he has but one sure reliance, that which the spirit gives, so in it he may draw nearer to God and there find that grace which will triumph over Death itself. Pain is a ploughing of the ground upon which the seeds of Truth are sown that they may grow good grain for the Kingdom of Heaven. Now look again."

As Rogers ceased speaking I once more turned to the earth that lay before my vision. I saw a bright presence, in his hand a scepter and on the scepter two emblems, an anchor and a heart. He was thrust-

THE TRANSFORMED SPIRIT OF PAIN

I saw a wide prairie full of weeds and shrubs and rank grasses. The Spirit of Pain descended upon it with a scythe and a plough.

ing with the scepter even as I had seen the monster thrust with his pronged spear. One emblem was for the body and one for the soul, for one was Hope and one was Love.

The vision of earth faded and in its place I saw a wide prairie full of weeds and shrubs and rank grasses. The Spirit of Pain descended upon it with a scythe and a plough. I saw him cut down the ugly things with the scythe and then furrow the soil deep with the plough. He broke the soil over and over again with cuts that crossed and recrossed each other. Then fell a shower of seeds caught and scattered by twelve men, one of whom was their leader.

"What are they?" I asked of Rogers.

"The seeds? They are the truths that the Son of God left for us in His teachings, His sufferings and His death."

"But why do they come from Heaven and yet are sown by the hands of men?"

"Because all truth comes from God and the revelation of it through Jesus Christ, who was Man as well as God. Those who scatter it are His Apostles who together, and to the end of time, rule and govern His Church. Look again."

The sowing was done. I saw the grain stretch golden as far as my vision could reach. Then once more appeared the transformed Spirit of Pain with his scythe. With wide sweeps he cut down the grain and other spirits gathered and bound it into sheaves.

XII

The Battle of Grace

And from the sombre skies
Dear Christ Himself has stretched out hands to me;
And I saw not. Oh! open Thou mine eyes.

DOUGLAS

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE BATTLE OF GRACE

THERE was no night in the Palace of Truth, but I had not noticed the fact till Rogers called it to my attention. Indeed I had not noticed that while my experiences had been continuous, without break, yet I was not tired, for my strength and wakefulness seemed constantly to increase. Now that Rogers told me that night never descended here I found myself wondering how it was that I could go so long without sleep.

"How long do you think it has taken for all that you have experienced to pass?" Rogers questioned.

I could give no answer for I did not know. I told him that I had lost the count of time.

"Perhaps," he remarked, "it is that you have actually lost time itself."

"But," I ventured, "that would be quite an impossibility."

"Not nearly so much of an impossibility as you think," he answered. "Do you not know that there is no such thing as time with God?"

"You mean that He — ?"

"Lives always in the present. He has neither past nor future. Time is a limitation, a measurable thing. God is not measurable, nor is He subject to that which is measurable. Infinite in Himself, He knows time only as a limitation in His creatures."

"It is beyond my comprehension, Rogers," I said.

"But glimpses of the truth are within it. You really have lost time just as I said. It will still further astonish you to know that what you are now about to see is past, present and future. Come."

He led me along the great gallery till we came to a window before which we stopped. I had seen no windows from without and had noticed none from within. There was no need of windows in a building through whose walls the light freely passed. Rogers read my thoughts and answered unspoken questions.

"This is merely a place from which you may see more clearly into the truths that you are learning. Look through the window now and tell me what you observe."

At that moment I thought the light was intensified and the source of it was behind me. I looked back instead of looking out, and saw, right in the center of the Palace, what I had not seen before: a fire burning with a clear white flame that outshone the

sun I had known on earth. It gave out a gentle heat which penetrated my being with a feeling of deep pleasure. As I looked toward it I saw that it sent out rays on every side which were separate and distinct, yet in some strange way appeared to be but one. I had often spoken of the rays of the sun on earth but never as if they were separate, one from the other, for there light bathed us as if it were indivisible. How, then, had we ever come to speak of it as being divided into rays? Here I saw each ray by itself, yet still had the feeling that they so belonged to one another that they made but one all-embracing light.

The rays passed through the clear crystal walls and sped swiftly toward the earth. There seemed to be something solid about them, for I could trace their flight as once I could trace the flight of birds. It was in trying to trace them that I was brought around again to the window.

"I see fire flying earthward, Rogers," I said. "Or is it fire? Perhaps I should have called it light?"

"It is both," he answered. "Watch the rays and see how they enkindle on the earth."

There was no need now to bid me watch for I had no eyes but for what I was seeing.

Over the whole earth stretched a pall of darkness that I knew was impenetrable to other eyes than those of the spirit. In the midst of that darkness men walked and worked. I saw them till the soil, raise tents in the wilderness, build homes and cities, give in marriage and accept the cares of parenthood. I saw their first crude attempts to fashion useful things as well as luxuries. I saw them organize schools in the groves and afterward erect buildings for them. I saw them form families, then groups, then nations. Kings were crowned before my eyes, armies clashed and new nations were born as old ones died. I saw dark and dreadful things too, things about which I dare not speak, but I saw noble deeds as well as evil ones; only I felt with sadness that the evil ones outweighed the good. All that I saw I told Rogers.

"And the pall?" he questioned, "does it remain?"

"It has not changed," I answered.

"Now look again for the rays," he directed.

They were hovering over the earth far above the pall of darkness. They seemed poised for a descent but waiting, like an army ready for the word of command to move on an enemy. They hung thus till I felt the tension of expectation. Something was

about to happen. For what word were they waiting? Anxiously I shot the question at my companion:

"What word, what word?"

He answered: "The Word of God."

Slowly then I saw the very center of the light over the earth deepen in intensity. It glowed with such dazzling whiteness as almost to blind me. Blind me it would have done but for the window through which I gazed and which I now knew was a window of special grace and mercy for me. The heart of the light was no longer a circle. Four points were moving to the four corners of the picture. They thickened as they moved and then I saw that they formed a gigantic Cross whose shadow fell over the darkness below; but it was not a shadow such as I once had known, for it was made entirely of the light. For a while it rested on the darkness, which threw its shape out in clear distinctness before me. I looked again at the light above it and saw all its rays shining down on the Cross. They moved nearer and nearer till each and all of them seemed to form part of it. The light was absorbed in the Cross.

The Cross was still lying as if floating on the darkness when I saw a Form upon it, a human form, with outstretched arms. Then the top of the Cross began to rise. Slowly the whole structure of

light became perpendicular. Its foot rested on the earth and its head reached far into the heavens. From it darted the rays and I knew that a mighty battle between light and darkness was on.

The rays from the Cross shot out to every part of the earth and wherever they struck I saw fires leap up. At first I could not see what it was that was thus set blazing, but I soon noticed that none of these fires was motionless. As quickly as I saw the blaze I saw swift movement, and then I knew that human beings themselves were thus being set on fire. They were not running about in pain and fear or in an attempt to save themselves from the flames. There was no sign of suffering on them. Rather did their faces seem radiant with the joy of zeal. They moved about making attempts to communicate the fire to others who had not been touched by the rays, or who had not been fired by them when touched. I remembered what had happened to many who had drunk of the Waters of Truth.

The pall of darkness now seemed to lose its power to spread or even to hold itself intact. Wherever there was an enkindled soul there was a luminous rift in the pall. I could see the pall itself pushing darkness forward to cover the rifts, sometimes with success. It was plain that nothing prevented the

complete dissipation of the darkness but failure to spread the fire to all men and women on the earth. The cloud of darkness continued to hang heavy over certain places, while over others, where many had received the fire, there were but straggling and struggling patches of it.

Some of the separate fires scarcely moved at all, but they seemed to have a power of attraction. Men and women naturally moved toward them and burst into flames at their touch. A multitude of these latter went afar off into the dark places to enkindle others. There was a constant stream of fire into those places and the struggle in them was bitter and stubborn. It seemed as if the pall of darkness were endowed with life and vigor to defend its outposts. As soon as a number of enkindled souls entered a dark zone, I could see the clouds of darkness rolling over them and endeavoring to extinguish the light and the flame they carried; but it was too great a task for the darkness.

Then a horrifying change came, and the pall of darkness was covered in an instant with living shapes in every ugly form imaginable, all with wings like the monster I had conceived the Spirit of Pain to have been before I saw him with my spiritual eyes. I knew these awful shapes to have been born

of the darkness out of which they came alive and fully developed. They rolled along the pall till they reached the luminous rifts in the dark cloud. Through these they dropped silently on the earth, some to prevent men and women from being fired by the rays from the Great Cross and some to attack those who had and to try to quench the fire and light of them. There were monsters, too, who, after attempts of various kinds to achieve their end, used swords to cut down their victims, but in this they were confounded, for from each body thus rendered lifeless a pure light and fire sprang up that enkindled others instantly. The souls of these, bearing palms, floated in phalanxes toward the Plain of Understanding and over it toward the Palace of Truth; but the fire and light that came out of them remained behind and still lived upon the earth, more powerful in enkindling others than if those who left it had not died.

There were many of the monsters who had the power to disguise themselves, and thus conceal their ugliness in order to approach those they wanted to attack. The disguise was quite often that of an angel of light but oftener it was of human form. The multitude of such human disguises filled me with

wonder; and this too I noted, that these latter were the monsters who most frequently were successful.

All this went on while the Cross still held its place, rising from the earth with its head in the heavens and visible to every soul below that cared to look up to it. Its rays never ceased to shoot forth; but now that the darkness had sent out its monsters I could see, but not understand, the most marvelous of all the things that were being shown me. The Cross began to multiply itself and of the multiplication there seemed to be no end. Wherever I looked over the earth I could see crosses, but when I withdrew my gaze and looked again at the Great Cross it stood alone. There was but One. The mystery of that left me buried in admiration and wonder as well as joy, but it remained a mystery. Wherever I saw what appeared to be a new cross I could see the monsters flying from it. They could not look upon it and live. The number of these crosses in some places was very great but in others quite small. Wherever they were they had the same effect on the monsters.

Rogers began to speak and I listened eagerly without withdrawing my eyes for an instant from the vision before me.

"You have seen, Bradford," he said, "the earth after the Fall and before the coming of the Word, the earth under the pall of darkness of original sin; then you saw the coming of the Word and its effects. The Cross is the glorified one of Calvary. Its rays are the truths of revelation and the graces that accompany them. The flame is the fire and light of the charity of Christ which fills the heart with a desire to spread it. Those who burn with it most brilliantly but move scarcely at all are those so penetrated with it that they rest in adoration; but they draw others to them, the zealous for action, who, inspired by them, go out to conquer. The dark places are those not yet penetrated by the rays. The monsters are the sins which put out the fire and extinguish the light, but in individuals only. They are not powerful enough to extinguish it in the whole of a redeemed world. Their disguises are their allurements, those of beauty, of passion, of unwise and untruthful learning, of drunkenness and folly, of dishonesty and deceit, of power and wealth.

"The crosses that you see everywhere over the earth, but which nevertheless are not multiplied but are one, are the Sacrifice of the New Law, identical with the Sacrifice of Calvary, and offered from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

They are the Clean Oblation of figure and of prophecy.

"You have seen a mystery of love and truth, of eternal mercy and kindness, the mystery of the operation of the Divinity in its relations with God's creatures. You have seen the great miracle of Grace, but you have not yet looked into the heart of it."

XIII

The Shield of Knowledge

I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the center.

SHAKESPEARE

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SHIELD OF KNOWLEDGE

BEFORE an alcove on the balcony of the Palace of Truth Rogers stopped.

"When I left you the first time, Bradford," he said, "you were on the Plain of Understanding. It was then that you caught a glimpse of yourself with the eyes of the spirit. I left you again at the entrance to this Palace because I could not help you there. I am now going to leave you for the third time and for a reason like to the first. I may not and cannot see what will be made visible to you alone. You must enter that alcove without me. Not even an angel of the Most High has the power to look at what there will be revealed to you."

Rogers must have noticed my agitation for he came instantly to my aid with an assurance that all would be well.

"I do not say," he went on, "that what you see may not distress you. It will. But I do say that it will be good and even necessary for your happiness."

"I am more and more mystified at your own knowledge of these things that are happening to me, Rogers," I said. "Once you told me that you had

more knowledge of them in life than I; but it does not seem to me as if the earth life ever offered such knowledge to anyone."

"In that," he answered, "you are mistaken, and the cause of your mistake is that you did not seek this knowledge on earth. In fact, my dear Bradford, you were so surrounded there with the cloud of your prejudices that you could not. An educated and cultured man, you were, nevertheless, in a condition of invincible ignorance on earth."

"On earth that answer would have offended me."

"It does not offend you now, Bradford, because you are in the Palace of Truth and here what is true can give no offense. Before I leave you again let me explain more. You already know that we take to this spirit life all that we had gained of knowledge on earth. It is the knowledge that shall be destroyed but that, as I already told you, does not mean destruction in the sense you would have used the word on earth. It means rather the merging of earth knowledge into the illumination that shall come to us from the Vision of God. Our eternal happiness is that Vision. On earth the promptings of the soul to know were from God, and intended to awaken in us a longing for Him. When we followed them humbly and with faith in His Word, He was revealing Him-

self to our souls. But there were those, and you were one of them, who stopped short and did not go on. I did not stop. After years of effort I shook off my prejudices and my pride and only asked humbly to be led. That is why I knew. Without being aware of it I understood things when I came here that now astonish you. I confess that I was as much astonished as you at the fullness of that knowledge."

"But what," I asked eagerly, "what was the secret of all that?"

"Humility," he answered. "Man is a creature to be taught. From the dawn of reason in him he is a pupil; and all earthly things were made to be his teachers. From the book of nature and from the still more sacred books of his soul, his heart and his intelligence he learns. The fundamental truths are written in them for his instruction. To these God adds His revelations, the last of which was given by His Son, the Word made Flesh. The results you have seen. The Spirit of Evil attempts always to destroy these results. You have seen him working to that end. But against his efforts there is one all-powerful protection, humility."

At that moment I felt the presence of another spirit. Rogers, too, must have felt it, for at the pronouncing of the word "humility" he turned quickly

to face the center of the Palace. Standing before us, and with feet resting on a fountain as if on solid rock, I saw an angelic figure. It seemed to fill a vast space, its head towering toward the roof, its wings half-spread as if ever ready for a flight of duty, its gaze fixed upon us. It carried what for an instant I took to be a clock or a dial; but I soon saw that it could not be either, for it had no hands or numbers on its face. The object resembled a clock or dial only in the fact that it was round and bright. As we looked at it the Angel smiled and, with a gentle gesture, indicated that we should continue to regard it.

What I saw on the face of the circular shield — I shall call it that for want of a better name — were four circles, three of them clearly outlined, all from the same center but not having the same circumference. The whole shield was one of light, with each part differently shaded. The smallest of these parts was, of course, nearest the center and formed a little circle by itself. Outside this circle was one much larger and less shaded. Outside this again was another still larger and still brighter. Beyond that no line appeared. At once I noticed that the outer circle not only included the others but, by some strange attribute of its own, seemed to be without

limitation or space. When I gazed at the inner circles I thought of the shield as a disk with an edge like the edges of all the disks I had ever known; but when I looked at the outer circle I could see that only the other three possessed circumferences and that the fourth really had none. How this was I cannot explain to you, for neither could my words describe it, nor your still veiled intelligence grasp it, even if they could.

The Angel permitted us to gaze at the shield for a little while before he made a second gesture, a sign that Rogers should speak.

"This shield," explained Rogers, "has recorded on it a demonstration of the truth about which we have been speaking. It is a truth that is known or may be known on earth in principle, but not with full comprehension. The circles seem imposed on one another but each exists, not as the part of a greater circle, but by itself. The circle in the center is that of Instinctive Knowledge. You see that its circumference is strongly marked and that there is no place where it seems, even dimly, to merge into the circle beyond it. The reason for that is a simple one: The next circle is that of Human Knowledge which receives its stronger light from the gift of reason and free will. The circle beyond that has a much larger

circumference. It is the circle of Angelic Knowledge which grasps truth, not in the small details needed for the limited life of trial on earth, but rather as to the principles from which, as truths, they emerge. The outer circle without a circumference is the circle of Divine Knowledge, which has no limitations. Each larger circle contains those that are smaller. Thus man has not only the sphere of reason and free will as his own, but has some gifts of Instinctive Knowledge. He is, however, more helpless in using them than the lower animals. That helplessness is made up for by his reason, which tells him how to remedy a defect coming to him because of a greater blessing. Between the circle of Angelic Knowledge and that of Human Knowledge the line is not so clearly marked as is the line between Human Knowledge and Instinctive Knowledge. The reason is that the gifts of God to man place him only a little lower than angels, who also have intellect and liberty, though they are now confirmed in their state by one mighty act in the exercise of their right of choice. The line between Angelic and Divine Knowledge is strongly marked, because the difference between Creator and creature is infinite. Note again that each circle beyond a circle contains the circles that it covers. Man has gifts of instinct. Angels have gifts

of intelligence, God's knowledge possesses all and compasses all. Note too that only the outside circle is without a circumference. It is pure light without blemish or shade."

"Why," I asked, "does the Angel stand on a fountain?"

"It is an ever-flowing fountain," he answered, "because the communication of the truth of God to His creatures never ends. Enough for man's salvation flows to him on earth. More flows to him here. Still greater will be the flow to souls in the Kingdom of God. But the living water is also the Word of God."

Rogers paused for a moment, but again the gentle smile and gesture of the Angel bade him go on. As he was about to do so I noticed that the fuller light of the outer circle now and then seemed to enter the circle of Human Knowledge. Rogers was quick to understand that this was what the Angel wished him to dwell upon now.

"Within the circle of Human Knowledge," he said, "the soul of man secures its intellectual food, ordinarily through such images only as the nature of an existence, united to the body, can supply. The soul may, by its intellectual processes, go far; yet not far enough to satisfy a destiny to live forever with God. The soul may know many eternal truths; but

purely through the sensible images presented to it by the body. It cannot go far enough to satisfy its own longings. The flashes of light that shoot from the circle of Divine Knowledge are the illuminations which God vouchsafes to the soul both to satisfy its longing to know its Creator and to lead it by surer paths to Him."

The Angel with the shield smiled again as if satisfied that Rogers had correctly interpreted the lesson. It faded away, but the Vision of the Shield itself left us more slowly. After the Angel had disappeared, it remained for what appeared to be some minutes before us. Then it too disappeared. I was the one who broke a long silence.

"Then there was a revelation: but the fact of it was dark to me. I could not see how, if given to one nation and to one generation, it should not have been extended to all men and for all time. I could see no justice in thus making it clear to some but not to others."

"It was given for all men and for all time and was not clearer to those who heard it by the lips of Christ than to those who heard it centuries after. Once given to man it remained ever after within the reach of Human Knowledge."

"But how?"

"By the teachings of an infallible guide, commissioned by Christ."

"But that, Rogers, is — "

"What on earth you hated, the Church Christ founded for all men."

"To me it never seemed reasonable that I should depend on men for my knowledge of God."

"What more reasonable than to protect with the power of God that which God became Man to establish?"

"It was asking too much, I thought, though I now say it humbly, that I should listen to the truths of God from the lips of creatures no higher than myself."

"Yes, if they were thus endowed for their own sakes, but not if so endowed for your sake and for the sake of Truth. If angels were thus commissioned, where then would be the merit of faith? Those who heard Christ with their own ears did not see His glory. They believed without it because He proved His words by His works. Those who lived after them were asked to believe for the same reason, and a thousand additional ones, the testimonies of other believers, as well as the marks of truth easily discernible in His Church. She was the City you saw set upon the Mountain."

"And I was one of those who attacked it."

Rogers smiled as he looked at me and said: "Go into the alcove, Bradford. Yes, you were one of those who attacked it; but ignorance is an impotent weapon with which to attack the body of Christ, even when in the hands of sincerity."

Saying this Rogers vanished from my sight. Before me I saw the curtain of the alcove part to let me in.

XIV

The Mirror of Judgment

Wouldst thou know others? Read thyself, and know.

SCHILLER

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE MIRROR OF JUDGMENT

THE alcove was empty and unfurnished. I could see nothing through the bare walls for a mysterious color made the crystal impenetrable. The color fascinated me by its beauty, and as I gazed upon it, I knew that I did not want to look beyond. It told me that for the moment there was nothing outside the alcove for me.

I stood in the center of the alcove. Behind me the curtain closed and merged into the wall so that I could not even see the place it had occupied but a moment before. I forgot that it had existed. I forgot Rogers with whom I had just now conversed and debated. I forgot the Palace and all that I had seen in it and from it. I forgot the Plain of Understanding. I forgot that I had lived on earth. I forgot all things but myself and, of myself, I forgot all but the nobler part of me — my soul.

The walls changed and became a mirror of bright reflecting brilliancy that circled the whole place. I saw my own soul and knew it instantly for what it was. But soon the feeling that it was only a reflection passed away. I thought no longer of mirrors or

burnished walls. I looked directly into the very depths of my own soul.

In the world one may always conjure up comparisons in an attempt to describe a thing of beauty. It would not be so with me were I to attempt to tell you of the beauty I saw in myself. There are no fitting comparisons. Matchless, of course, my soul could not be, for in it I saw also the beauty of the souls of others and knew how precious each one is in the sight of the God who created it. All things created take value from the aim and object for which they are called into being. Nothing is precious and beautiful for itself, but directly or indirectly for God alone, the Eternal Uncreated. I knew as I looked at my own soul that it had been made for a high destiny, a destiny so high that not the wildest dream which the glowing imagination of man ever produced could picture the tiniest part of it. Can I say more? I would that I could, but how? On earth each thing of beauty stands by itself, for on earth the refined gold cannot be gilded nor the lily painted. The beauty of the soul is not thus like the beauty of earth, for it is beauty joined to a thousand beauties. It is the refined gold gilded, the lily painted, the violet perfumed. Your mind cannot grasp that, yet it is the simple truth. How did I see this? I looked at

my soul and beheld it as the Creator had endowed it so that it might be fit for His Heart and for His Kingdom.

So wrapt was I in that sight that it seemed a long time before I noticed any other attribute of my soul but that of beauty. Then its greatness began to inspire me. On earth we used to speak of "great souls," not knowing that the words were an expression foreshadowing an understanding of a deep truth. The greatness of a soul overbalances the greatness of everything else in creation that is less than the angelic. I knew, as I gazed at my soul, that no universe was high enough, wide enough, strong enough, deep enough, wonderful enough, to contain it and to be its final home. It was made for the Infinite. I realize that all this is beyond you now. In principle you know, but see it you cannot with mortal eyes; nor can mortal intelligence compass the thought. Were it possible on earth thus to see and understand, then either your free will would be engulfed or your pride would rise, like that of Lucifer, to destroy you.

In the sight of the greatness of my own soul I lost all thought of earthly things, of the trifles that once seemed great and important to me. Vanished were the last vestiges of affection for the indifferent things that on earth had held me. Money became dross,

power a fleeting shadow, passion a regret. Only love stayed, but it was love purified by a glimpse of Eternal Loveliness; for in the mirror of my soul I saw God — but as a poet spoke of Him when "dark with excess bright His skirts appear."

In my soul I saw, too, the strength and power that admits of no decay, no weakening, no death. I understood at a glance the reason for immortality. My soul's attributes instantly barred the idea of any essential change in its nature. The flame of immortality burned in it and could not be extinguished. It burned smokeless, clear and white, never rising, never falling, quiet, tranquil and untroubled. I could see the possibility of its strength reaching out to others, for instantly did it convey the conviction that it had power of penetration. The influence of good souls, great souls, was plain to me as I gazed with spirit eyes into my own.

It was when the attribute of purity presented itself that I remembered Rogers' warning that I would be distressed. This soul of mine was pure but not spotless. I saw stains on it that could not affect its essence but could smirch its purity and, unless purged away, unfit it for its eternal destiny. I knew who had put them there as I knew each of them and when they were made. Swiftly came the understanding that I

was before the Judgment, but I saw no Judge. I heard no accusing voice and I had no defense to offer. In my soul was the realization of the presence of sins forgotten. It was the book of record in which I myself had written the account. From its one page I could read the things that only God and myself knew. Every disloyal or evil thought was there, every action, every desire, and all measured at their true value. I read what justice means, what charity calls for. It was a terrible yet a consoling reading, for in my soul I saw the glory of the triumph of justice and knew that, even had I lost everything, I should still have to confess that it were better I should do so than that Eternal Justice should not triumph.

Over what I might call the very heart of my soul I saw the darkest stain. It was the one flagrant injustice that I had done in life. Mistaken I had been about many things. Ignorant I had been about my highest obligations. Blind I had been to the light of truth. But for all these there was the palliation of ignorance. For my treatment of Owen Brennan I had neither reason nor excuse. What I had done to him, a faithful servant, was done in blind rage and against my own better judgment. Though I had repented of it and had resolved to repair the injury, yet, when I saw the stain that sin had made on the

purity of my soul, I wanted to hide, to run out of the Palace of Truth and seek a lake of darkness on the Plain of Understanding; but something kept drawing me the other way. I cried out in my distress. I searched for the curtain that shut me into the alcove. It was there — open. Through it I dashed and ran madly along trying to forget but knowing that I could not. But I know that I was going where I belonged. I was hungry and thirsty for God.

Rogers followed me and Rogers understood.

"Go on, Bradford," he said. "Go on alone. You will not turn back now. You cannot. You can never leave the Palace for its walls extend to God. Go on. I, too, have seen my soul and shall follow you."

I scarcely heard him as I ran on, but I knew he would be with me. Where? I did not know where. The walls of the Palace extended as Rogers had said they would. Swiftly as I shot forward, more swiftly did they seem to go before me, keeping me always within them. Then I forgot the walls, for before me I saw a Sea rolling with huge waves on its bosom. Shining beyond it was the City of God.

XV

The City of God

The temple I would build should be all white,
Each stone the record of a blameless clay.

BLUNT

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE CITY OF GOD

LOOKING backward from the Palace of Truth I had seen the world with eyes unveiled. Now for the first time I looked forward. My gaze was fastened on the City of God and I knew that I should never look backward again. No thought of the world I had left remained in me. In the sight of the City of God I could think only of Him and my soul burned with longing to be with Him, to cling to Him, to drink from the inexhaustible fount of the knowledge that is Himself. I knew too that I no longer needed the direction of Rogers who was beside me; but Rogers was silent in the understanding that his mission for me had ended. He had led me to where Vision took full possession of him and of me. There was place now for no other teacher than God. Swiftly cleared intellect spanned the Sea rolling before me. My glimpse of the City of God was a distant one, but in it I learned what no human words or wealth of human learning and earthly experience could have taught me, learned it instantly and in seeming completeness; yet in that very act of

learning was the certainty that the seeming completeness was but the perfection of a never-to-be-ended beginning.

What did I see in the City of God? Nothing more than faith would have taught me on earth, yet infinitely more. The difference was like the difference between the tiny mustard seed and the tree that from it grew. I could no more describe in words what I saw than the vision of an ant, which could compass all the seed, should be able also to compass the tree full grown.

What strange paradoxes will appear to you, a man still living, in all that I tell you of the City of God. Before me I saw its gates, yet as you would picture them there are no gates. Neither are there streets of gold nor houses of precious stones. Yet the City of God has all of these while having them not. Even inspiration must resort to words and images for expression. The soul still confined to a yet unglorified body may apprehend great truths but only through the senses that are at once its guides and its limitations. The gates of the City of God are true gates through one of which every soul found worthy must enter. They are precious and beautiful, richer than pearls and more resplendent than rubies, but

they are not made of material things. Two are the gates: one that of Innocence and one that of Penance.

At the Gate of Innocence there is no guard. It stands wide open. Those who enter by it fly through it as if returning in joy to a home from which, like children, they had departed to play but never to be out of its sight and neighborhood — like children who run out of the house of their parents into the garden and, fearful of being away too long, rush quickly back to the love that is within a mother's protecting arms. I could not help thinking of children, since few but children seemed to be entering through the Gate of Innocence that stood all white and beautiful, with portals that could not close.

There are signs of joy before the purple Gate of Penance, for everyone who passes through it meets the welcome of the Prodigal. To each the voice of the Father speaks and on each falls the rich robe of forgiveness. All come in the tattered wraps of failure to change them for the garment of virtue regained. Before each is spread the feast, won by the Lamb that was slain. A purified heart is the pass to this Gate, and that purified heart the soul places for eternal safety in the Heart of Purity which is the Tabernacle of Unending Love.

There are streets in the City of God — rather there is one street. It is The Way, and leads straight to the Father. For want of a name intelligible to you I shall call that street The Way of the Righteous, since none but the good ever set foot upon it.

There are mansions in the City of God, some finished but millions always rising. Though far away, and with the Sea of Purgation rolling between it and me, yet my vision dwelt on the one that I knew to be mine. I saw no hands building it yet stone upon stone was being laid, one on the other, and I understood. My mansion was building out of the deeds of mine on earth that were good, out of the poverty of my little virtues, out of the small store of my good intentions. The ornaments on its walls were acts of charity of every kind, of thought as well as deed and word, acts by me long forgotten or esteemed too trivial for remembrance. In the City of God all that is good is gathered in the eternal refuge of all goodness.

In the City of God there is the tranquillity of the Perfect Love to which all within it is united. Nothing enters there but that which belongs, first by its nature and then by grace, to that Perfect Love. That which was created only for the earth was created to minister to that which was created for union with

God. But even the smallest created thing goes back to its Creator; the rocks, the clods, the mountains, the sea, the clouds, the beasts — all; for by serving man, who is destined for God, they through him serve God and in him reach God. Nothing was made in vain, for nothing that reaches union with God is vain or useless.

The pain of regret swept through me for all my blindness. I could have known had I not permitted pride of intellect to lull me into a fancied security. How trivial now I knew my knowledge on earth to have been. Before my eyes I could see the castle of my vanities in all its ugliness. For one moment it was there, and then the light from the City of God shot through it and it dissolved like the little wisp of smoke that rises out of a fire whose last spark is extinguished.

XVI

The Sea of Purgation

When all the world dissolves,
And every creature shall be purified,
All places shall be Hell that are not Heaven.

MARLOWE

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE SEA OF PURGATION

ROGERS, beside me on the shore of the Sea, spoke his last words to me before I saw him rise and wing his flight toward the City of God.

"You will need me no longer now, Bradford. It is the end of human teaching for you. This, old friend, is the Sea of Purgation and yonder is the satisfaction of every yearning, the perfection of every virtue, the vision of all truth. Over there, Bradford, is the Father who waits for you. I go before you to Him."

Splendor shone from Rogers. Hope I had seen in human faces but never before the full glory of highest hope fulfilled. Triumph, joy, happiness, but above all, the rapture of love, were pictured to me as I looked at this new and hitherto unknown Rogers. He turned from me to face the glowing light of the City. It shone over him and clothed him as with a mantle. He was lifted up to skim swiftly over the Sea. I saw him dip into it, to rise out of it again and again. I saw bright hands from the seeming emptiness above the Sea beckon him

from the rolling waves of pain and set him once more on his brilliant flight. One was that of a Woman, and when I saw that Thrice Blessed Hand, beautiful lines came back to me from the earth life:

"Ivory Tower! Star of the Morning! Rose
Mystical! Tower of David, our defense!
To thee our music flows,
Who makest music for us to thy Son.
So, when the shadows come,
Laden with all contrivances of fear,
Ah Mary! lead us home,
Through fear, through fire;
To where with faithful companies we may hear
That perfect music which the love of God,
Who this dark way once trod,
Creates among the imperishable choir."

I repeated the lines over and over as I watched the triumphant soul fly over the Sea of Purgation, dipping in and rising out of it as the bright hands beckoned him to come and the Thrice Bright One that was a Woman's reached to him when it seemed as if his strength had failed. I watched till I could see him no more.

To my own self I turned, for I was still looking into the mirror of my soul with the black stain over where the heart of it might be. That soul was throbbing now with love and longing, reaching out spirit hands across the Sea of Purging Pain. O my God, how I yearned for Thee! Beyond those waves of suffering was my home, my Father, my All-Desired and my All-Desirable — but I dared not yet go to Him. Not even the tongue of an angel could tell you the poignant agony of that longing, nor could it hope to express the holy joy that filled me in the knowledge that I, too, would go even as Rogers had gone.

Then came voices to me, voices that spoke of courage: "Go on," they urged. "The stain will be purged out in the Sea. Go on, go on."

"Who are you?" I called into the air.

"The prayers of those you aided on earth," they answered. "Go on, go on. We are here to help you. Not even the cup of cold water is forgotten."

But I could not go. That black stain was a living, burning thing. It shot a fear into me that dug deeper with each dart of agony. Then my Sin spoke to me. I should have known the falsehood of it, but I listened and was afraid.

"You dare not. The Sea is wide and few there are to help you. You must swim through it slowly, for you had not Rogers' faith to bear you up and over it now. Who thinks on earth of praying for you who did not believe? Yes, you will go, but not now, not now. Look along this shore and see the multitudes who, like you, are fearful to venture in. Stay and suffer more of hunger and thirst for Him whose Word you ignored and whose message of Truth you would not hear."

I knew! I knew! It was only the fear that held me. I was consumed with hunger and thirst for union with God there beyond the Sea; but I did not dare — I did not dare to go.

I looked to the right and the left and saw the multitude of other waiting souls gazing intently at the City. Their struggles to overcome their fears were plainly to be seen. But the fears were not all-powerful, for even as I looked along the line of souls on the shore of the Sea, I saw some of them plunge into the waves and some rise to skim over them even as had the soul of Rogers. I saw the bright hands, too, and often that Thrice Blessed One. I yearned to follow, but still I knew that I did not dare.

As I turned my gaze again toward the City of God I heard another voice passing over me. It came

from behind and floated on as though on its way to the Throne of Mercy. It was that of a child praying. Dear God, how could a father not know the voice of his son?

"Father in Heaven," came the prayer, "have mercy on the soul of my dear father. He did not know, but in his own way, dear God, he tried to be just and good. He was always so to me. Have mercy on him, dear Father in Heaven, and bring him safe to Thee. If he had but known Thee on earth he would have been the best of Thy children, for his heart was pure, his hand was open and his words were as clean as his thoughts. He loved me. Love Thou him, dear God, and have mercy on his soul. He needs Thee and Thy mercy. Amen."

"Pray more, my son." It was a new voice and to it I thrilled, for it was that of my dear wife. "Christ promised much to innocent little children. Your prayers will go farther than mine. Pray harder for him, son."

Again the childish treble floated over and by me, but I could not hear more of the petition than the words a thousand times repeated, "Dear Father in Heaven, it is for my own good father of earth that I pray. Help him, help him."

If there were tears that a soul could shed, mine would have filled an ocean. But the fear did not leave me.

How was it that I came here to you, Father Moylan? I know that is what you would ask. By the Grace of God won for me by the prayers of my boy. Upheld by the joy of knowing that I would yet go to the City of God, but sunk also in the pain of the fear that held me back, my Angel touched me and gave me the answer God had vouchsafed to my boy's petitions:

"Go back. He who loves innocence and can refuse nothing to its petition permits you. Go back. I shall give you the body you once had and will have again. Go into it and return. You know to whom you should go, the one who would never have thought to ask again a favor of you, who refused him once, when he begged for nothing but justice.

"Tell him how to right the one great wrong you did in life. Then come back here to the shore of the Sea of Purgation and your fear will drop from you."

That is how I came to you this night to tell you how you can repair for me the injustice I did in my ignorance, anger and pride.

The rest is my secret.

Never more can I say that I have not seen happiness. When I had promised what I did gladly promise, I looked on the face that seemed to be that of William Bradford and on it I saw the joy of peace.

XVII

Peace

We, heirs of peace unpriced,
We who are born in Christ,
Praise we our God again,
Lord of our Peace.

ST. CLEMENT

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

PEACE

THE sunlight was streaming through my window when I awoke and the doctor was standing beside my bed, his finger on my wrist.

"No need to ask if you are better, Father Moylan," he said. "You look like a man transformed and transfigured. I am on my way back from an all-night vigil at the hospital. I have a message for you from Mr. Bradford."

"From Mr. Bradford? But Mr. Bradford is dead."

"He is still alive and has regained consciousness. He passed from the coma to what appeared to be a troubled sleep about eleven o'clock last night. I was sent for and stayed with him. Just before I left he recovered consciousness and spoke."

"He sent a message to me?"

"Yes, he asks you to come to him at once. You are feeling well enough to go?"

In less than half an hour I was standing at the bedside of William Bradford.

Imprimatur.

† THOMAS H. MCLAUGHLIN, Bishop of Paterson.

October 6, 1942.

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Kelley, F. FICTION (a)

When the veil is rent

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